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Addressing Probation and Parole Officer Stress

Final Report

November 14, 2003

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Foreword

Supervision of offenders in the community by governmental agencies is just over 100 years old. The profession of probation and parole has seen many changes in the past century, but most of these have occurred in the past two decades. Today, probation and parole—or community corrections, as it is generally referred to—has moved from an offender-focused profession to one that is more involved with the community and public safety. This is not to say that probation and parole professionals are not concerned with treatment and changing human behavior, but they are addressing community needs while addressing the needs of offenders through sound treatment modalities and appropriate supervision in the community.

The community corrections profession is at the hub of the entire criminal justice system—in fact, it is the only agency that deals with offenders at every stage of their journey through the criminal justice process. It is the only entity that deals directly with all of the government actors, community members, victims, and families that are part of this overall process. Because of this unique role, parole and probation officers are faced to some degree with every criminal justice system practitioner problem. As a result, they frequently experience a range of different types of stress. However, as this report and other research make clear, most of the stress that probation and parole officers experience is related to the organization, not the work itself.

This report presents a balanced view of the difficult work that community corrections professionals do. This work has a human cost that is often manifested in stress for the line officer, supervisor, and administrator. The report points out the symptoms and consequences of stress and documents a variety of structured and promising responses to this stress on the part of probation and parole agencies nationwide that have recognized and given the attention the problem deserves. Reading the report will give probation and parole practitioners a better understanding of the stress their work entails as well as

provide a number of promising approaches to preventing, reducing, and managing the stress, thereby creating an improved and safer working environment.

Sarah V. Hart
Director
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Risdon Slate was kind enough to share with us a prepublication copy of his important study of probation officer stress and decision making, with its comprehensive literature review.

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Initially, Amy Mazzocco, and, later, Andrew W. Goldberg, program monitors for the project at the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), provided valuable support throughout the project. Cheryl Crawford Watson, Acting Deputy Assistant Director for Research and Evaluation at NIJ, made a number of suggestions for improving the report.

Peter Finn
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Executive Summary

Addressing Probation and Parole Officer Stress is intended to help probation and parole agency administrators develop an effective program for preventing and treating stress among officers. The report strongly recommends that administrators provide the same stress services to support staff—and to the families of officers and support staff.

Why Establish a Stress Program for Probation and Parole Agencies?

A stress program can:

(1) ***Save agencies money***—or at least recoup some or all of the cost of setting up and running the program by:

- *reducing staff turnover.*

“There are long-term cost benefits [to the agency] by stabilizing the situation after a critical incident [through a formal stress program] in terms of reductions in sick time, turnover, and stress-related disability.” — Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole Board member

- *reducing the agency’s liability*—and, as a result, its insurance premiums.

“Liability protection was . . . a definite spin-off of having a program like CIRT [Critical Incident Response Team].” — Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole Board member

(2) ***Improve staff performance by:***

- *reducing sick time.*

“Yes, I take mental health days. I use them a lot and I get in trouble for it, but it’s a case of self-preservation.” — An officer

- *improving employees’ ability to concentrate* on their work.

“In my opinion, staff [after a particular critical incident] could have recovered to a ‘new normal’ much sooner [if they had had a stress program to help them].” — Director of Probation and Parole Services, Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole

- *improving staff morale.*

“I have seen at least a half dozen situations in which I have seen staff express appreciation for CIRT.” — Former Chairman, Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole.

- *reducing conflict between line staff and supervisors.*

“My stress is not due to clients or the workload—it is all due to my supervisor. Since using the [stress management program], I have been trying to transfer to a unit that has . . . more work, but [where] the support is behind you.” — An officer

(3) ***Increase staff safety by:***

- *helping to reduce officers’ distractions* with personal and work-related stress.

“While agents are distracted by the [critical] incident, it is dangerous to send them in the field.” — District Director, Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole

- *reducing turnover.*

“Employees need the kind of services that help before we get stressed. Most people [when they are first hired] see themselves retiring here, but their needs aren’t met, and they leave.” — A clerical worker

(4) ***Increase public safety.*** When officers can concentrate without distraction on supervising offenders, they are more likely to be sensitive to when offenders are heading toward new criminal activity and need to be reined in or even revoked.

The Extent and Sources of Probation and Parole Officer Stress

Research strongly suggests that *many probation and parole officers experience considerable job-related stress*, especially in terms of:

- high caseloads,
- excessive paperwork, and
- meeting deadlines.

Cumulatively, these three work conditions make it difficult for many officers to ***find the time to supervise their caseloads properly***—another major source of stress.

All of these sources of stress are ***organizational***—that is, most officers feel that their agency, not the job or offenders, is responsible for their stress.

Probation and parole ***supervisors*** and ***support staff*** can also experience considerable stress on the job. ***Family members***, too, may experience stress because of the work their

partners do. Family members can also be a source of additional stress—or a buffer against stress—for their partners. As a result, paying attention to family members' stress can reduce officers' stress.

Program Case Studies

Nine stress programs illustrate wide variation in goals, staffing, operations, services, and other features:

- The Washington State Department of Corrections has established a Staff Resource Center in each of its five regions staffed by an occupational nurse and a counselor who provide ***comprehensive stress services*** to all employees.
- The Harris County, Texas, Community Supervision and Corrections Department has tested a ***20-hour, four-session stress management training program***.
- The Cuyahoga County, Ohio, Juvenile Court, developed a pilot program for juvenile probation and detention officers, and their supervisors, that involved ***nine all-day sessions*** devoted to wellness, relationship skills, and financial planning.
- Several probation agencies in Southern California contract with a single provider, The Counseling Team, for ***a range of services*** including peer supporter training.
- Pennsylvania's Board of Probation and Parole has developed a statewide ***team of trained volunteer peers*** who work with agents, support staff, and family members ***after a critical incident***.
- The California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (C-POST) hired HeartMath to ***test the firm's two-day stress management training*** with 90 correctional and institutional parole officers. The test includes measurements of participants' heart and blood pressure rates, and cholesterol levels.
- Three other probation and parole agencies have implemented ***physical exercise programs*** that are expected to help reduce officer stress.

Program Staffing and Training

Recruiting, screening, training, and monitoring stress program staff are of the utmost importance because addressing issues revolving around employee stress requires sensitivity, confidentiality, empathy, and a high level of interpersonal skills.

Marketing the Program

Stress programs will not be effective unless agencies can ***“sell” the program successfully to all levels of staff***. One way to win over employees is to involve all staffing levels in the design, planning, and operation of the program. ***Union officers*** also need to be involved in the design and planning of the program. Getting ***family members*** to participate in a stress program can be very difficult, but programs have succeeded through critical incidents and individual counseling with officers.

Other Keys to Program Success

To have a successful program, probation and parole agencies also need to:

- ***Guarantee confidentiality.*** With certain exceptions, mental health practitioners may not share what clients tell them without the client's permission. However, trainers and peer supporters generally do not have this privilege.
- ***Reduce organizational sources of stress.*** Because it is probation and parole agencies themselves that cause the most significant stress for officers, a stress program will be only partially successful unless it works with management to reduce the stresses that the agency may be creating for employees.
- ***Evaluate the Program.*** Evaluation is essential to find out whether and how the program needs to be improved—and for convincing funding sources of the importance of supporting the program.
- ***Obtain adequate program funding.*** Agencies need to determine the program's funding needs and then identify strategies for minimizing program costs.
- ***Take advantage of available technical assistance.*** The report provides the names and contact information for program coordinators and experts.

Chapter 1: Why Establish—or Expand—a Stress Program for Probation and Parole Officers?

Key Points

Addressing Probation and Parole Officer Stress is intended to:

- ***motivate*** agency administrators to develop a stress program,
- ***suggest options*** for structuring the program, and
- ***provide guidance*** for planning, starting up, and maintaining the program.

The report is also intended to motivate agencies to ensure that their programs serve *support staff* and *family members* of employees.

A stress program can have valuable benefits for agency administrators:

Financial savings through—

- reducing the need to *recruit, screen, and train new officers and support staff* to replace employees who quit because of stress
- preventing increases in *insurance premiums* for liability coverage through reduced stress-related lawsuits and worker compensation costs

Improved staff performance through—

- reducing *the need for staff to cover* for employees who call in sick or quit because of work-related stress
- reducing *difficulties staff have concentrating* on their work
- increasing *staff morale*
- reducing conflict *between line staff and immediate supervisors*

Enhanced officer safety through—

- reducing officer *distractions* with work-related and personal stresses
- cutting down on the number of *inexperienced* officers doing field work by reducing the number of staff who quit because of stress

Improved public safety through—

- increased officer motivation and ability to concentrate
- retention of experienced officers

To achieve these benefits, the program must reflect a genuine concern on the part of agency administrators for their employees' welfare.

Audiences, Purposes, and Contents of *Addressing Probation and Parole Officer Stress*

This report has been written primarily for:

1. ***heads of probation and parole agencies*** who can decide whether to implement or expand a stress program,
2. ***probation and parole agency mid-level staff*** who will most likely plan, set up, and operate the stress program, and
3. ***line officers and support staff*** who may be interested in motivating management to establish a stress program.

Criminal justice system researchers, employee assistance program (EAP) administrators and other EAP staff, and mental health professionals may also find the report useful.

Addressing Probation and Parole Officer Stress is intended primarily to:

- ***motivate*** agency administrators to develop an effective stress program,
- ***suggest options*** administrators have for structuring the program, and
- ***provide guidance*** for planning, starting up, and maintaining the program.

The report is also intended to motivate agencies to ensure that their programs fully serve ***family members*** of officers because of the stress an officer's work can cause for his or her partner—and the additional stress family members can inadvertently create for the officer. Serving ***support staff*** is also essential, because clerical workers are often on the “front lines” interacting with offenders on the telephone and in the office.

The National Institute of Justice, the research, development, and evaluation agency of the U.S. Department of Justice, has published two companion reports:

- *Developing a Law Enforcement Stress Program for Officers and their Families* (NCJ 163175), and
- *Addressing Correctional Officer Stress: Programs and Strategies* (NCJ 183474).

Both reports are available from the National Criminal Justice Reference Service at (800) 851-3240 and on-line at www.ncjrs.org.

Why a Stress Program Can Benefit Probation and Parole Administrators

Research and first-hand accounts from probation and parole officers, as well as support staff, have made clear that employment in this field can be stressful—sometimes extremely stressful. Chapter 2 documents the level of stress among many officers and identifies the most serious sources of their stress. Because the effects of stress can be severe and widespread, *a program that helps prevent and relieve stress can have valuable benefits for agency administrators.*

Financial Savings

First, a stress program can *save agencies money*—or at least recoup some or all of the cost of setting up and running the program—in two ways.

- *By reducing staff turnover.* There is a high level of voluntary staff turnover among probation officers—in Florida, the rate was about 30 percent for fiscal year 1995.¹ High turnover results in increased costs to the agency for recruiting, screening, and training new staff. According to a Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole board member, “Turnover is costly to the employee and to the agency. There are long-term cost benefits [to the agency] by stabilizing the situation after a critical incident [through a formal critical incidence response] in terms of reductions in sick time, turnover, and stress-related disability.”
- *By reducing the agency’s liability*—and, as a result, its insurance premiums. According to one researcher, “An additional benefit [to the agency] . . . [is] the increasing number of stress-related legal claims by employees against employers. . . . By addressing the causes of organization burnout, costly legal actions can be reduced.”² Although not a primary motive for why Pennsylvania’s Board of Probation and Parole developed its Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT), “liability protection was also an issue,” according to a board member, “because through the team the board can control the flow of information to the media and the public at large. This is a definite spin-off of having a program like CIRT.”

Improved Staff Performance

Second, a stress program can benefit administrators *by improving staff performance*. Many officers take extra “sick time”—so-called “mental health days”—just to relieve some of the pressure from working in a stressful occupation. An officer readily admitted, “Yes, I take mental health days. I use them a lot and I get in trouble for it, but it’s a case of self-preservation.” However, when officers take mental health days, other officers

have to cover for them. As one officer said, “We have problems with coworkers calling in ‘sick’ at the last minute because we have to cover for them—take on their caseload.” Reducing stress *can decrease the frequency of staff calling in sick, thereby reducing the work load—and stress—of staff who do show up for work.*

A stress program can also *help reduce officers’ difficulty concentrating on their work—that is, being productive and effective—because of chronic or critical incident-related stress.* Staff may have special difficulty concentrating on their work after a critical incident because they may experience:

- Fear that *they* may become the next victim—“What if *I* get a letter that threatens my family?”
- Guilt that they did not prevent the incident—“Why didn’t I see that coming and warn her?”
- Anger at the victim—“How could he commit suicide and leave behind a spouse and small children?”
- Anger at management for not having prevented the incident—“If only they had given us better training/provided more comfortable bulletproof vests/upgraded our computers so we could track offenders, this wouldn’t have happened.”
- Anger at how management responded to the incident—“The bosses were so callous—my supervisor told me to ‘get over it’ and go back to work” or “The director wouldn’t even defend the officer’s using his gun when the press accused him of brutality.”

In a former position, the Director of Probation and Parole Services for the Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole had seen what happened after an agent committed suicide and there was no procedure, formal or informal, for handling the emotional aftermath among coworkers. He learned that:

“Even in seemingly well-functioning offices, procedures need to be in place to deal with critical incidents. Much of the chaos we experienced could have been mitigated if an appropriate protocol was in place. In my opinion, staff could have recovered to a ‘new normal’ much sooner.”

“Even in seemingly well-functioning offices, procedures need to be in place to deal with critical incidents. Much of the chaos we experienced could have been mitigated if an appropriate protocol was in place. In my opinion, staff could have recovered to a ‘new normal’ much sooner.” — Director of Probation and Parole Services, Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole

A stress program can also increase employees’ productivity and work quality ***by improving staff morale.*** By providing stress services, administrators demonstrate that they care about their staff as human beings, not just as employees. Showing genuine concern for employees can result in workers feeling better about the agency and therefore being more willing to perform at their very best—rather than feeling so angry or resentful at management that they decide, “I’m not going to bust my rear end for *them!*”

“Because it is perceived that there is little support . . . for staff members, workers in this pilot [stress management training program] expressed a need for acknowledgement from the administration, and the wellness program met that need.” – Cuyahoga County (Ohio) Juvenile Court Comprehensive Wellness Program Final Report

Yet another way a stress program can improve productivity is ***by reducing conflict between line staff and supervisors.*** A study of 711 probation officers found that an astonishing 87 percent reported they disliked their supervisors.³ ***A stress program that addresses and corrects harsh supervisory styles where they may exist, including supervisors’ failure to periodically recognize line officers’ hard and high-quality work, can improve productivity.*** Once again, rather than slack off because they resent their supervisors’ criticisms or indifference, workers will be more motivated to work to capacity because they feel the agency recognizes and respects their contribution.

Yet another way a stress program can improve productivity is by reducing conflict between line staff and supervisors. A study of 711 probation officers found that an astonishing 87 percent reported they disliked their supervisors.

A stress program can also improve morale among mid-level administrators *by saving them time* handling the emotional aspect of the critical incident and the logistics of a response. According to a Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole District Director:

“Critical incidents take valuable time away from district directors and office managers—for example, on one incident before the CIRT Team was in place, it took a district director two hours just to locate a suicide victim’s family. An organized program relieves managers of the time-consuming—and stressful—responsibility of organizing a response.”

Increased Staff Safety

A third way a stress program can benefit administrators is *by increasing staff safety* in at least two respects:

- *By reducing officers’ distractions* resulting from personal and work-related stress. According to a Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole manager, “While agents are distracted by the [critical] incident, it is dangerous to send them in the field.” If an officer is stressed out to the point of agitation—whether following a critical incident or as a result of a build-up of *chronic* stress over time—he or she may not be able to concentrate on the safety precautions or display the needed alertness that officers must have in order to help prevent being assaulted by an offender (or by members of the offender’s family or the neighborhood). In addition, if stress makes officers preoccupied and tense, they may be less able to resolve confrontations peaceably and end up having to resort to the use of force, which places them at increased risk of getting hurt.
- *By reducing turnover.* Replacing lost staff with new staff can compromise officer safety if remaining staff have to pick up the workload of the departed staff until new officers have been recruited, hired, and trained. The increased caseloads for remaining staff “may weaken supervision and increase the potential for revocation and recidivism.”⁴ A stress program can reduce turnover by:
 - intervening before employees become disenchanted with the organization and the agency, and
 - helping already disgruntled employees to work out their dissatisfaction with their jobs, career ladders, or supervisors.

A support staff person at one agency explained:

“Most people here have been very stressed out for a very long time. The employees need the kind of services that help before we get stressed. How do we get our career goals met? How do we know ahead of time what to do in a critical incident? A good counselor can improve employee wellness and keep the good employees longer. Most people [when they are first hired] see themselves retiring here, but their needs aren’t met, and they leave.”

“Most people here have been very stressed out for a very long time A good counselor can improve employee wellness and keep the good employees longer. Most people [when they are first hired] see themselves retiring here, but their needs aren’t met, and they leave.” — A support staff person

Increased Community Safety

Finally, a stress program can *increase community safety*. When officers have high levels of motivation and can concentrate without distraction on supervising offenders, they are more likely to recognize when offenders are heading toward new criminal activity and need to be reined in or even revoked. In addition, as noted above, when stress leads to staff turnover, agencies are saddled with large numbers of rookie officers hired to replace departing officers. Public safety is compromised by the new officers’ inexperience. A stress program that helps retain experienced officers can result in closer and more experienced supervision that reduces the chances that offenders will recidivate.

The Importance of Administrators’ Motivations

A stress program will have few if any of these benefits unless one of the motives of the agency head and other top-level administrators in initiating the program is the welfare of employees. Staff will quickly discern when a program does not have their interests at heart. As a Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole employee put it in describing the board’s relatively new Critical Incident Response Team:

“CIRT has demonstrated to every employee [that] there’s a level of genuine concern among the board and [that] it will step to the plate and deal with critical incident issues. A lot of people were impressed they came and followed through on the policy and protocol—it wasn’t just PR [public relations] or CYA [cover your rear].”

Another employee gave a concrete example based on the CIRT Team’s response after an employee suicide:

“I was impressed that the Director of Probation and Parole Services and the Victim Advocate—two heavyweights—took off their captains’ hats and

cooperated and gelled as a team—titles and positions were irrelevant; ‘let’s discuss what we need to do.’ Everyone was an equal—the upper tier players didn’t feel they had to be the commanders. [For example,] one immediate concern was cleaning up the blood in the bedroom so the family would not go back to a room splattered with blood. So the Victim Advocate said she would go over and clean it—no big deal.”

Ultimately, administrators want their staff to do the best possible job. Reflecting this motivation, when the former director of a probation department learned of a grant opportunity from the National Institute of Justice, she asked her training director to submit a proposal because “I was interested in anything that could train my staff to do a better job.”

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1. Florida Secretary of the Department of Corrections, cited in Simmons, Calvin; John K. Cochran; and William R. Blount, “The Effects of Job-Related Stress and Job Satisfaction on Probation Officers’ Inclinations to Quit,” *American Journal of Criminal Justice*, 1997, 21(2): 213-229.
 2. Brown, Paul W., “Probation Officer Burnout: An Organizational Disease/An Organizational Cure, Part II,” *Federal Probation*, September 1987: 17-21.
 3. Simmons, Cochran, and Blount, “The Effects of Job-Related Stress.”
 4. Ibid.

Chapter 2: The Extent and Sources of Probation and Parole Officer Stress

Many probation and parole officers experience considerable job-related stress. The three most frequent and severe sources of stress for officers are:

- *high caseloads,*
- *excessive paperwork,* and
- *meeting deadlines.*

These three work conditions cumulatively make it difficult for many officers *to find the time to supervise their caseloads properly*—another major source of stress.

Officers experience several other important—but generally less pervasive or severe—sources of stress, including:

- inadequate supervision, such as rarely receiving compliments for work well done,
- lack of promotional opportunities,
- low salaries that require them to hold down second jobs,
- danger of physical assault or threats from offenders,
- changing or conflicting State, agency, or interoffice policies and procedures,
- being held—and feeling—personally accountable for offenders' misbehavior,
- inconsistent demands and perceived excessive leniency on the part of courts and judges, and
- lack of community resources, such as treatment programs, for helping offenders.

Almost all of these sources of stress are organizational—that is, *most officers feel that their agency, not the job or offenders, is responsible for their stress.*

More officers cited some type of *physical activity* than any other technique as the way they attempt to cope with stress.

Probation and parole supervisors and support staff can also experience considerable stress on the job. Family members, too, can experience stress because of the work their partners do. They can also be a source of additional stress—or a buffer against stress—for their partners. As a result, *paying attention to family members' stress can reduce stress among officers and support staff.*

This chapter provides an overview of the nature and extent of stress among probation and parole officers. The chapter begins with a brief discussion of the nature of probation and parole work as background to appreciating the stress many officers experience on the job.

Background to Understanding Probation and Parole Officer Stress

While probation and parole officers¹ have some responsibilities that are different, much of their work is very similar, especially in terms of supervising offenders.

Probation Work

Probation is a sentence given to offenders that entails a specific period of correctional supervision in the community. Typically, probation officers supervise offenders during regular office contacts, by going to offenders' places of residence, or both. However, many probation officers also investigate the background of offenders brought to court, write presentence investigation reports, and recommend sentences.

Probation is structured in a wide variety of arrangements across the country. Probation services differ in terms of whether the executive or judicial branch provides them, which agencies fund them, and whether they are primarily a state or local responsibility.² As a result, probation in the United States is administered by more than 2,000 separate agencies.³

There were 3,932,751 individuals on probation at the end of 2001 compared with 2,670,234 individuals at the end of 1990.⁴ There were more than 60,000 probation employees in 1999.⁵

Parole Work

Parole is a period of conditional supervision following a prison term—that is, the parolee is subject to being returned to prison for violating the conditions of his or her release. The judge, and the parole agency or parole officer, stipulate the conditions the parolee must meet to avoid returning to prison.

The administration of parole is less complex than the way probation is structured: there is only one parole agency in each state, and it is always administered by the executive branch.⁶ However, in some states, the jobs of parole officer and probation officer are combined.

By 2000, 16 States had abolished parole in the sense of no longer giving parole boards the discretion to release prisoners. However, even in States where parole has been abolished, some other form of supervised release has been established. Indeed, every state except Maine and Virginia has some requirement for supervising newly released inmates.⁷

There were 732,351 individuals on parole at the end of 2001⁸ and at least 10,883 parole staff supervising adults at the end of 2000 in 15 States that reported the information. There were also at least 31,209 combined probation-parole staff supervising adults in 31 States that reported the information.⁹

The more than 100,000 probation and parole officers in the Nation represent a large number of individuals who may be experiencing significant job-related stress. Given their significant numbers, it is important to examine and publicize the nature and extent of stress in this relatively ignored group of criminal justice practitioners and also to identify and promote programs that may hold promise for reducing the workplace stress they may experience.

Officers' Responsibilities Vary Widely

The types and levels of stress that probation and parole officers experience *vary significantly depending on the particular nature of the work they do and the types of offenders they supervise*.¹⁰

- Officers who deal with juveniles may experience stress from having to cope with irresponsible parents—"My little Johnny wouldn't be here if it weren't for that troublemaker Susie getting him into this mess!" and "*I'm* not going to that meeting [for family members]—*I'm* not on probation."

- Officers who make field contacts may be concerned about their personal safety, while institutional parole officers may have concerns about their safety working in a prison.
- Officers who prepare presentence investigation reports can get frustrated by judges who do not follow their recommendations.
- Officers who supervise sex offenders can feel responsible 24 hours a day for offenders' behavior—and the risk they pose to the community.

The types and levels of stress that probation and parole officers experience vary significantly depending on the particular nature of the work they do and the types of offenders they supervise.

Some officers who work in rural areas report they experience less stress, or different types of stress, than officers who work in inner cities:

- “We are a small, rural city unaffected by drugs, gangs, or violent crime. Field work and outside contacts are fairly easy.”¹¹
- “For many probation officers in rural areas a . . . problem concerned the excessive amounts of driving time spent in completing their field visits One officer noted that ‘we cover 25,000 square miles of Utah with 15 agents.’”¹²
- In many small communities, employees’ families and offenders’ families attend the same schools, churches, bowling leagues, and other activities. Running into each other can create an uncomfortable situation for officers or support staff. One officer reported that, “When an offender found out that his children attended the same elementary school as my children, the offender made a veiled threat against my kids during an office contact.”

This diversity in probation and parole officer responsibilities and types of offenders they supervise also influences the extent to which officers’ *family members* experience stress related to the officer’s job. For example, family members of officers who do regular evening field work in dangerous neighborhoods may worry more about their partners than family members may who live with officers who never leave their downtown office buildings.

How Much Work-Related Stress Do Probation and Parole Officers Experience?

Very little research has been conducted that examines the work-related stress probation and parole officers experience. However, the research conducted for this report (see “How This Report Was Researched” on page 18), combined with the meager available evidence from previous research, suggests that *many officers experience considerable job-related stress*. All the officers, supervisors, experts, and other knowledgeable people contacted for this report said that officers experience either a great deal of stress or some stress; none reported that officers experience not too much stress or no stress at all. Of course, stress levels typically fluctuate over the course of the week or even day; as one officer said, “My overall level of stress? It can vary, but there is always some—and, on some days, a whole lot.”

“My overall level of stress? It can vary, but there is always some—and, on some days, a whole lot.” — a parole officer

A slight majority of individuals contacted for this report said that officers’ level of stress had increased over the past several years, primarily because:

- caseloads have increased,
- offenders on probation and parole tend to be more violent than previous offenders,
- there are fewer opportunities for promotion, and
- there are fewer options for helping offenders (e.g., fewer drug treatment programs).

What Are the Most Common Causes of Stress for Probation and Parole Officers?

The research literature, and the conversations and interviews conducted for this report, suggest that there are several significant sources of stress for many probation and parole officers. In some cases, the stresses are slightly more significant for probation officers than for parole officers, or vice versa, but in general they are similar enough to be able to speak in terms of probation and parole officers combined—“officer” stress.

The research conducted for this report used four different approaches.

- (1) *Informal conversations* with:
 - 19 probation or parole officers in 9 different agencies,
 - 10 probation or parole supervisors in 8 different agencies, and
 - 7 agency administrators, 4 counselors and trainers, and 5 researchers.
- (2) *In-depth telephone interviews* with 1 to 6 individuals associated with each of five probation or parole agency stress programs.
- (3) *On-site visits* to four probation or parole agency programs, involving in-person interviews with 3 to 10 individuals at each site.
- (4) A *review* of published and unpublished materials (see endnotes to this chapter).

Despite this research, the findings presented in this chapter are subject to limitations:

- Most studies have not randomly chosen the officers they studied. The few studies that have selected officers at random were conducted in limited jurisdictions (e.g., a single city, county, state). In addition, response rates have not been high.
- The probation and parole officers and supervisors contacted for informal conversations for the present study were not selected at random, nor were they intended to be representative of all officers and supervisors; most were members of the American Probation and Parole Association's Health and Safety Committee. Neither the nine programs described in the report nor the individuals associated with the programs who were contacted were selected at random.
- The informal conversations and site interviews conducted for this study were confidential—that is, officers and others were guaranteed that nothing they reported would appear in a manner that could attributed to them without their written permission. However, the conversations and interviews were not anonymous: officers knew that the researchers knew their names and agencies. As a result, some of the officers may not have been entirely candid in expressing their opinions and perceptions about their own or other officers' stress.
- There is tremendous diversity in terms of the job responsibilities—and, as a result, types of stress and stress levels—of probation and parole officers: officers may supervise juveniles, or adults, or sex offenders—or have no caseload at all; may prepare presentence investigations or do field work—or both; and may work in prisons or in secure office buildings. As a result, the stress reported by one group of officers may not apply to the stress experienced by other officers.

As a result of these limitations, the stresses, levels of stress, and sources of stress reported in this chapter cannot be generalized to all probation and parole officers in the Nation.

The three most frequent and severe sources of stress for officers are high caseloads, excessive paperwork, and deadlines.

High Caseloads

Officers report that high caseloads create more stress for them than any other single aspect of their work. There is objective evidence to substantiate these officers' feelings. While there is no officially recommended maximum caseload number for probation and parole officers (a lot depends on the types of offenders they supervise), the average regular adult supervision caseload for probation officers in 1999 was very high—139.¹³ But even this “average” caseload size figure “vastly understates the number of offenders the typical officer supervises because not all probation employees or even line officers supervise offenders.”¹⁴

Excessive Paperwork

Next to high caseloads, *paperwork is the most significant source of stress for many officers.* “There’s a piece of paper for everything,” one officer observed. A study of Federal probation officers found that paperwork was the most frequently mentioned of six sources of stress.¹⁵ Even when extensive Management Information Systems (MIS) have reduced the paperwork burden, unwieldy data entry screens and outmoded databases can be equally onerous for officers and supervisors.

Deadlines

*Having to meet deadlines—many of them unexpected—is the third most common and serious source of stress for officers.*¹⁶ Many officers must meet a variety of immutable deadlines, many of them unpredictable.

- *Court hearings.* According to one officer, “A supervisor can come in and say, ‘so-and-so got arrested, so you have to go to the police department and get him.’ So I have to drop what I’m doing to prepare the paperwork—there’s a time limit for getting the arrest report done for the hearing deadline—so all my other work backs up.”
- *Release dates.* *An institutional parole officer said, “Home planning investigations have a time limit—that’s stressful. For example, a releasee needs to have his home vetted to see if it’s suitable, so I have to do a home plan, and [then] I have only three weeks in which to do*

the visit, go to the local police department to find out if the cops have had to respond to drug dealing in the home, take a look at the neighborhood, and so on.”

Lack of Time

High caseloads, excessive paperwork, and deadlines, while distinct sources of stress, typically combine to have a widespread frustrating result: individually and, especially, cumulatively ***they make it difficult for many officers to find the time to supervise their caseloads properly.*** That is, many officers find that they are so burdened by huge caseloads that they are unable to help probationers and parolees avoid recidivating and thereby protect the public. Over half (54 percent) of the probation officers in one survey reported they did not have enough time to get everything done.¹⁷ A study of Federal probation officers found that too little time to get the work done was the most frequently reported cause of stress.¹⁸ As a result, many officers say they end up prioritizing their caseload into offenders they supervise closely and those they partially, largely, or completely ignore:

- “We have over 5,000 cases which are totally unsupervised due to staff cuts.”¹⁹
- “We have ‘banked’ caseloads [cases unassigned to a specific officer unless a violation is reported or other action is required] of 6,500 clients who are ‘supervised’ by 4 probation officers.”²⁰
- “I’m frustrated that I can’t help people [i.e., offenders] because of paperwork—that I can’t make more of a difference [in their lives].”
- “I have 108 cases right now—I can’t supervise all of them by the book—there’s no time. One offender alone can eat up an enormous amount of time.”

High caseloads, excessive paperwork, and deadlines . . . cumulatively . . . make it difficult for many officers to find the time to supervise their caseloads properly.

In short, ***not being able to do the job the way they know it should be done and would like to do it—if they had the time—is another common source of stress for officers.***

Other, Less Significant Sources of Stress

Officers, supervisors, and researchers identify several other important—but generally less pervasive or severe—sources of stress for officers.

- *Inadequate supervision.* Some officers report that their supervisors create significant stress for them. Most of the criticisms of supervisors reflect the feeling that bosses fail to recognize the good work that line officers do—never singling them out for praise or thanking them for a job well done. One officer who told a supervisor about the need for complimenting officers who do a good job was told, “Your reward is every two weeks in your pay check.”²¹ Another common criticism of supervisors—and source of stress—is that many of them never or rarely adopt any line officer suggestions for improving the workplace.²² Given these commonplace feelings of being ignored, it is perhaps not surprising that an astonishing 87 percent of 186 probation officers surveyed in one study reported they disliked their supervisors.²³
- *Lack of promotional opportunities.* Some officers report that lack of opportunities for advancement in their agencies is a significant source of stress.²⁴
- *Low salaries.* Many officers report that the low salaries they are paid contribute to their work-related stress—in one survey, 80 percent of the officers reported stress due to inadequate pay.²⁵ Indeed, the median annual salary for probation officers and correctional treatment specialists in 1999 was only \$36,130.²⁶ Because of their inadequate pay, many officers hold down second and even third jobs to make ends meet. Working such long hours may create still further stress for many officers because they have so little time to spend with their families and may be chronically tired.
- *Danger to officers.* The danger of assault—typically experienced during field contacts but sometimes even in the office—is a significant source of stress for some officers. In a survey of Federal probation and pretrial service officers, almost all (96 percent) expressed concern for their personal safety when making field contacts; almost 9 percent had experienced physical assaults (see the box).²⁷ By contrast, many officers report they do *not* find field work stressful—in some cases in part because they are former police officers and used to enforcing the law.
- *Changing or conflicting policies and procedures.* Many officers report that changing or conflicting policies and procedures that regulate their behavior are a significant source of stress. These frustrating policies and procedures come from two sources. First, different judges may request different information—“We have 26 courts we serve, and they all want things done differently,” one officer observed. Second, probation and parole agencies may have their own conflicting or changing regulations.

Surveys of State parole or probation officers in New York, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Virginia have found that between 39 and 55 percent of probation or parole officers have been the victims of work-related violence or threats at some time during their careers.²⁸

In Pennsylvania, 38 percent of the total probation/parole workforce in the State have been victimized (e.g., assaulted, threatened, intimidated) at least once during their careers. Half of officers who actively supervise cases were victimized. Of the most serious incidents, 24 percent took place in an offender's or someone else's home, 22 percent in agency offices, 9 percent on the telephone or by mail, and 11 percent on the street. Almost 38 percent of the victimized officers reported being shaken up emotionally by the incident, with 11 percent experiencing physical symptoms such as headaches and stomach aches.²⁹

Many probation and parole officers think their work has become more dangerous. There are good explanations for this perception. "First, more offenders have serious drug histories and have little hesitation in using violence."³⁰ More generally, people sentenced to probation and released on parole are more serious offenders than in the past in terms of seriousness of criminal acts, prior records, and drug abuse histories.³¹ A second reason for the perception of increased danger is that ". . . over 72% of agencies have either requested or required officers to spend more time in the field than in previous years . . . ,"³² and field work is typically perceived to be the most dangerous aspect of officers' work. In 2003, for example, New York City probation officers were authorized to carry handguns because of a new policy that required an increased number of officers to make field visits.

- *Personal accountability for offenders.* Some officers feel the community, the media, or agency administrators will hold them personally accountable for offenders' misconduct. In Washington State, this feeling has been exacerbated by the passage of the Offender Accountability Act, which provides legal recourse for victims of crime committed by a reoffender by allowing personal liability lawsuits against state community corrections officers. In addition, many officers feel responsible for their offenders' misbehavior regardless of any outside accountability—they simply take the responsibility on their own shoulders when an offender threatens public safety and feel they have fallen down on the job.
- *Courts and judges.* Some officers object that the court system does not pay attention to officers' reports. One officer observed that "Judges will be judges [i.e., do whatever they want]. I work with a kid and recommend something to the judge, and he ignores it, but the officer knows what the kid needs." Other officers find what they perceive to be leniency on the part of courts to be stressful.³³

- *Lack of community resources.* In many cases, there are decreasing community alternatives available for offenders, such as drug treatment programs and halfway houses.³⁴ One officer reported that “We used to have two intermediate facilities for alcohol or noncompliant offenders, a restitution center for helping them to get jobs, a residential treatment facility, and a counseling facility. They’re all gone, and the only [remaining] drug facility is only for males. So we can’t be creative in terms of sanctions or rehabilitation.”

Most Stress Comes from the Organization

Almost all of the sources of stress identified above—including the three most prevalent and serious sources of stress—are organizational. Most officers feel that their agency, not the job, is responsible for their stress. In fact, few officers mention offenders as being a significant source of stress. As one officer said, “I get some stress from offenders, but we’re trained to deal with them; I feel I have control over that part of my work.” Other research confirms this finding: “Surprisingly, it is not contact with the offenders that burns out PPs [probation and parole officers], but the organizational sources of stress.”³⁵

Almost all of the sources of [officer] stress . . . are organizational. Most officers feel that their agency, not the job, is responsible for their stress.

Probation and parole officer supervisors seem to experience less stress than do line officers,³⁶ perhaps because they have more influence in getting their suggestions implemented by agency administrators, have less, if any, direct contact with offenders, and have fewer deadlines.

Nevertheless, many supervisors report they experience significant job stress. Of the supervisors contacted for this study, one reported experiencing a great deal of stress on the job and all the others said they experienced some stress. Another study found that about 16 percent of supervisors reported feeling burned out at least once a week.³⁷

Supervisors cite a variety of sources for their stress:

- *Being caught between management and line officers*—for example, “Officers blame me for not implementing changes, but managers have little control over implementing improvements,” and “I’m trying to please the bosses while enforcing policies officers don’t like.”

- *Having to discipline line officers:* “Firing an employee was very stressful . . . and then he filed a grievance.”
- *Dealing with line officer stress:* “My officers’ high caseloads create stress *for me* because they tell me, ‘I can’t see this guy four times a month and see collaterals . . .’ So officers’ stress causes *me* stress.”
- *Handing out dangerous assignments* and feeling concerned and responsible for the officers’ safety. A firearms trainer said, “I worry about their [the students’] getting hurt on the street—I’d feel responsible.”

A previous study found that a majority of supervisors cited dissatisfaction with pay and lack of promotional opportunities as sources of stress.³⁸

Consequences of Stress and Coping Strategies

Stress has several harmful consequences for officers, their colleagues, and their departments, but many officers have found ways to reduce or eliminate some types of stress.

The Effects of Stress

Many officers take extra “sick time” just to relieve some of the pressure from working in a stressful occupation. According to a person who has provided stress management training to many officers, “There is a huge impact [of stress] on the abuse of sick days.” An officer admitted, “Yes, I take mental health days. I use them a lot and I get in trouble for it, but it’s a case of self-preservation.” Another officer reported that “We have problems with coworkers calling in ‘sick’ at the last minute because we have to cover for them—take on their caseload.” Employees may also take sick days because they are truly ill, but their illnesses—lower back pain and headaches, for example—may be the result of work-related stress. For example, as noted above, a study of Pennsylvania probation and parole officers who had been victimized found that 11 percent reported experiencing physical symptoms such as headaches and stomach aches.³⁹

“There is a huge impact [of stress] on the abuse of sick days.” — a stress management trainer

Working as a probation or parole officer can *take a toll on the officer's family*—even when the officer does not experience significant work-related stress. Nearly one quarter of 700 probation and parole workers who reported having been victimized some time during their careers said the incidents had negative consequences for their families.⁴⁰

Some officers report that chronic job stress creates significant stress for their partners:

“Some officers take it [their frustration with their work] home when kids [juveniles on probation or parole] get locked up [i.e., recidivate]. This creates family problems. When I was a new officer, my girlfriend told me, ‘Don’t talk to me about this [problem you’re having at work], it’s depressing.’”

“The job creates a lot of stress, and it’s brought home. This has a negative impact on the family, so the officer returns to work with another problem. So the stress [of the job] is compounded [by the tension that officers’ stress may create at home].”

“The job creates a lot of stress, and it’s brought home. This has a negative impact on the family, so the officer returns to work with another problem. So the stress [of the job] is compounded [by the tension that officers’ stress may create at home].” — a probation officer

Some officers report that their spouses or partners can increase the officers’ stress if the family members:

- keep expressing fear about the officer’s safety on the job,
- complain that the officer is being too uncommunicative about his or her work,
- resent the officer’s working evenings or weekends,
- get upset when the officer “takes home” his or her work-related frustrations by harping on them or by becoming distant, short-tempered, or reclusive, or
- feel distressed simply knowing that their partners are experiencing stress.

Conversely, family members can help *reduce* the officer’s stress if they are understanding, flexible, and empathetic. One officer reported, “My spouse is a godsend—calm, doesn’t overreact, tells me to calm down—‘You can’t change that idiot client.’”

Methods of Coping

Officers use a variety of strategies for reducing job-related stress. However, *more officers cited exercise—some type of physical activity—than any other technique as the way they attempt to cope with stress.* The exercise can be walking, jogging, using weights, golfing, or gardening. Several officers mentioned playing with or walking their dogs as one way of reducing stress.

It is essential to involve support staff in any stress program because they, too, experience job-related stress. As one officer said, “There is definite stress for clerical staff: officers are all over them—‘I need this warrant **NOW**, this court appointment **NOW**,’ and so on.” In addition, officers and supervisors report that clerical workers can become very upset when critical incidents happen to officers, supervisors, and, of course, to other clerical staff.

Finally, some officers observe that support staff are often the first people to greet offenders in the office. As a result, the task of calming down offenders who are angry or frustrated falls most frequently on the person at the front desk. Furthermore, when officers and supervisors are upset, support staff sometimes bear the brunt of their outbursts or poor coping mechanisms.

[M]ore officers cited exercise—some type of physical activity—than any other technique as the way they attempt to cope with stress.

A supervisor said a good way to reduce stress is *prioritizing*:

“We had 200 cases at one time, so we picked the 50 worst cases and took our chances with the rest. As a result, we get a feeling of making achievable goals no matter what the agency expects. We set our own expectations, not let someone else set them.”

Another supervisor tells staff, “No matter what the department or I say, do what will promote community safety and CYA. Don’t worry about small stuff and stupid stuff.”

Other, less common, ways officers cope with stress include:

- discussing with other officers how to handle troublesome cases,
- finding support through their religion,
- venting, and
- talking with a family member.

* * *

Given the extent and severity of stress among so many probation and parole officers, there is a tremendous need for agencies to take steps to help prevent and reduce this stress. The following chapter presents the stress programs that six departments have developed, along with descriptions of three agencies' exercise programs. The program descriptions make clear that agencies have many options for deciding what kind of stress program to implement—and that many of the choices involve little or no cost.

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 4. Glaze, Lauren E. *Probation and Parole in the United States 2001*, U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, August 2002, NCJ 195669.
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 6. Petersilia, *Reforming Probation*, p. 37.
 7. Petersilia, *Reforming Probation*, p 115.
 8. Glaze, *Probation and Parole in the United States 2001*.

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 18. Thomas, "Stress Perception." See also, Slate, Wells, and Johnson, "Opening the Manager's Door."
 19. Lindner and Bonn, "Probation Officer Victimization.
 20. Ibid.
 21. Over half (51 percent) of 711 probation officers reported that supervisors usually do not let them know how well they are doing. Whitehead, "Job Burnout and Job Satisfaction." See also Slate, Wells, and Johnson, "Opening the Manager's Door," and Simmons, Cochran, and Blount, "The Effects of Job-Related Stress."
 22. One study found that low levels of officer participation in workplace decision making was associated with increased physical symptoms of stress and stress perceived to be caused by the agency. See Slate, Wells, and Johnson, "Opening the Manager's Door." According to one officer, "We're constantly being told what we're doing wrong." "... [probation officer] employee perceptions of participation in workplace decision-making was an important variable in relation to job satisfaction and its influence on both reported organizational and physical symptoms of stress" (quoted in Slate, Wells, and Johnson, "Opening the Manager's Door").
 23. Simmons, Cochran, and Blount, "The Effects of Job-Related Stress."
 24. One survey found that only 5 percent of 711 probation line officers reported they were satisfied with their opportunities for promotion. Whitehead, "Job Burnout and Job Satisfaction." See also Simmons, Cochran, and Blount, "The Effects of Job-Related Stress."

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Chapter 3: Program Case Studies

- Six different stress programs illustrate *diverse options* for structuring a stress program for probation and parole officers and their families.
- The programs' most *distinguishing features* are whether they:
 - are in-house programs or externally contracted agencies or individuals;
 - are proactive (try to prevent stress), reactive (address critical incidents), or both;
 - offer critical incident stress services, ongoing counseling services, new employee and in-service training, or some combination of all three;
 - offer services periodically (e.g., crisis response, training) or continuously (e.g., counseling)
 - make use of peer supporters, mental health professionals, or both;
 - serve family members, civilians, or both; and
 - are highly structured or more informal.
- Three other programs feature *exercise* as their principal or only stress management focus.
- The wide variation in program operations creates a challenge for deciding which model to adopt or which features of different models to synthesize into a new program design. However, the options provide the freedom to *tailor program components* to each particular agency's needs and resources.
- No agency provides comprehensive stress services. However, agencies should implement *as many components* of a full-service stress program *as possible*.
- Coordinators of the programs are available to offer *telephone consultation* regarding the suitability of their programs' structure and services for other probation and parole agencies to adopt.
- The experience of the nine programs suggests "lessons learned" for jurisdictions that may be considering developing or improving their own stress programs for probation and parole officers.

This chapter provides case studies of six programs that help prevent or treat probation or parole officer stress. The case studies concentrate primarily on the programs' operational procedures. A final section in the chapter presents the physical exercise initiatives that three other probation and parole agencies have developed that by design or as a spin-off can help reduce officer stress.

The remaining chapters of the report address other aspects of the nine programs:

- Options for *staffing* a stress program as well as *training* staff (chapter 4).
- Barriers and solutions to *marketing* a program (chapter 5).
- Other keys to program success, including *securing trust* and reducing *organizational* sources of stress, and taking advantage of available (and free) *technical assistance* for planning, implementing, and improving a program (chapter 6).

Principal Program Features

The box below identifies selected features of each of the six principal programs (the three agencies with exercise programs are not included on the chart). As shown, *the programs are very different in terms of the services they provide, the types of individuals and groups that provide the services, their organizational structure, and other features.*

The variation in program operations and services may make it difficult for probation and parole administrators to easily select commonly implemented features around which to structure their own programs. Instead, administrators must take the time (a) to pick and choose among the range of alternatives for designing their own stress program and (b) to assess the benefits and limitations of each possible component. On the positive side, this programmatic diversity means that administrators need not feel obligated to follow slavishly any one model or approach; they have *the freedom to tailor various components to the particular needs of their agencies and employees* and to the characteristics of their agency's structure, history, size, and resources.

| Program | Agencies Served | Staffing | Services | Budget | Clients |
|---|---|---|--|--|--|
| Washington State Staff Resource Centers | State Department of Corrections | Staff counselor and occupational nurse in each of 5 DOC regions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • short-term counseling • stress management training • manager training • critical incident debriefing • treatment of stress-related physical problems | \$558,000 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • probation officers • managers • support staff • correctional officers |
| The Counseling Team | probation agencies in Southern California | independent clinicians | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • individual counseling • training • critical incident stress debriefing • peer supporter training | varies by department served | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • probation officers • support staff • family members |
| Harris County, Texas, Stomp Out Stress Program | County Community Supervision and Corrections Department | in-house program manager; outside professional trainers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • stress management training | \$38,324 (\$100-\$200 per class if in-house trainers are used) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • probation officers • supervisors • family members |
| Cuyahoga County, Ohio, Comprehensive Wellness Program | County Juvenile Court | in-house program manager; outside professional trainers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • stress management training | \$100,000 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • probation officers • detention officers • supervisors |
| Pennsylvania Critical Incident Response Team | State Board of Probation and Parole | in-house program managers; peers supporters | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • group and one-on-one interventions after critical incidents | about \$22,000 a year after initial start-up costs of about \$51,000 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • agents • supervisors • support staff • family members |
| California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (C-POST) | State Adult and Juvenile Correctional Institutions | outside contracted organization | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • two-day training • materials for participants | \$215,000 (but can be done for \$7,500-\$8,500 for groups of 30 public sector employees) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • juvenile correctional officers • juvenile institutional parole agents |

Ideally, however, agencies should design programs that incorporate the entire panoply of stress services that make up a comprehensive program—individual counseling, in-service and new employee training, supervisor training, a peer support component, and critical incident response. The Washington State Department of Corrections Staff Resource Centers come closest to this ideal, while a few probation agencies in Southern California have contracted with an independent clinical organization, The Counseling Team, to provide several stress services. Of course, it may be wisest to start small—implement one or two stress services—and add other components later.

While the task of choosing which services to offer initially—and how to staff and market them—may seem daunting, key participants in all but one of the programs described in this chapter have agreed to field telephone calls to share information about how they got going and what currently works best for them. The names and telephone numbers of these individuals follow each case study. Chapter 6 identifies still other individuals with national experience in stress programming who are available for consultation. In addition, while not chosen randomly and therefore not necessarily representative of stress programs across the country (see the box “How the Nine Programs Were Chosen”), the nine programs provide “lessons learned” about how to go about designing, implementing, expanding, and improving a stress program.

The nine programs described in this chapter and discussed elsewhere in the report were identified through a nationwide search that included:

- canvassing the officers, supervisors, agency administrators, and researchers with whom conversations were held as part of the exploratory research on the nature and extent of probation and parole officer stress conducted early in the project (see chapter 2);
- examining the Corrections and Law Enforcement Families Services (CLEFS) Website for National Institute of Justice grantees that were focusing on probation and parole officer stress;
- searching electronic bulletin boards that address probation and parole officers interests;

- posting requests for information about possible programs on bulletin boards operated by:
 - the National Institute for Corrections;
 - the American Probation and Parole Association;
 - the National Association for Probation Executives;
 - the Association of Paroling Authorities International (APAI); and
 - Corrections.com.
- following up leads provided by members of the study advisory panel (see the list of advisors on page ii).

Despite these efforts, only 15 programs were identified. Two criteria guided the selection of the nine programs eventually included in the study:

- (1) they had to have had a formal structure involving an administrator and trained staff rather than an ad hoc arrangement involving service providers without special expertise; and
- (2) they had to have had, or been able to collect, minimal data on program operations (e.g., number of officers and family members served); preference was given to programs that had conducted an outcomes evaluation.

Among the nine programs, three initiatives that involved physical exercise were included in the report even though they provide few or no other stress management services. These efforts were included because officers consistently reported that physical activity was their most common method of relieving stress (see chapter 2).

From among the nine programs selected for study, four (Boulder, Colorado, Department of Probation; California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training [C-POST]; Cuyahoga County, Ohio, Juvenile Court; Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole) were chosen for site visits, rather than telephone interviews, because of their complexity or the opportunity to observe program activities.

Because the programs were not selected randomly, they are not necessarily “typical” of other programs across the country. In addition, they were not chosen as “models” for other jurisdictions to follow but rather as good examples of different but viable ways of providing stress services.

Lessons Learned

The experience of the nine programs provides a number of guidelines for how other probation and parole agencies can go about designing, implementing, and improving their own stress programs. Below, is a list of the principal lessons learned, culled from the case studies in chapter 3 and the chapters that follow the case studies. After each lesson

learned, italicized text identifies the chapters, case studies, or both that discuss or illustrate the lesson in further detail.

- **A stress program can offer many benefits to probation and parole administrators.** Benefits can be financial, improved staff performance, and increased staff and community safety. (*Chapter 1: Why Establish*)

A stress program can offer many benefits to probation and parole administrators . . . financial, improved staff performance, and increased staff and community safety.

- **Do not wait for a stress-related crisis (e.g., employee suicide) before implementing a program.** Prevent a crisis *before* it occurs. Then, if one occurs, the program can minimize the consequences. In addition, employees may see a post-crisis program as a management public relations move. (*Pennsylvania Board; Washington State*)
- **Agencies must choose among a wide range of options for designing a stress program.** There is no one “model” for a stress program that will “fit” all agencies. While making these choices requires extra work, agencies can tailor a program to their unique needs, culture, and resources. (*Chapter 3: Program Case Studies*)
- **Include supervisors in the program.** Many supervisors experience stress, too. (*Chapter 2: Extent and Sources; Harris County*) Furthermore, poor supervisory styles are a significant source of stress for employees. (*Chapter 1: Why Establish; Chapter 2: Extent and Sources; Cuyahoga County; Washington State*) The program can help supervisors to identify employees under stress and refer them for help. (*Chapter 4: Staffing*)
- **Weigh carefully whether to allow agency administrators or supervisors to participate in the same program activities alongside line staff.** There are advantages to their involvement but also serious drawbacks. (*Chapter 5: Marketing*)
- **Offer program services to support staff.** Many support staff experience stress—and their stress can cause stress for officers. (*Chapter 2: Extent and Sources; Pennsylvania Board*)
- **Carefully consider carefully the advantages and drawbacks to mandating participation in the program.** An agency’s history, culture, and needs can influence how successfully the two groups can be merged. (*Cuyahoga; Pennsylvania Board*)

- **Involve family members in the program.** Many partners of probation and parole officers experience significant stress because of their spouse's work. Involving partners is important, because they can increase—or decrease—the officers' stress on the job. While many programs have experienced tremendous difficulty getting officers' partners to participate, some approaches have succeeded. (*Chapter 2: Extent and Sources; Chapter 5: Marketing; Southern California; Pennsylvania Board; Southern California; Cuyahoga County*)
- **Examine all the trade-offs between using outside staff and in-house personnel to provide stress services.** For example, outsiders may lack of experience with the agency's operations or probation and parole officer work, but employees may see insiders as untrustworthy because they “represent” the organization. (*Chapter 4: Staffing; Harris County*)
- **It takes time and effort to screen, train, and supervise peer supporters.** However, they can be an inexpensive alternative (or supplement) to providing some of the services that professionals can provide. Do not use them to provide counseling. (*Chapter 4: Staffing; Southern California*)
- **Allow time for the program to gain acceptance and recruit participants.** Most employees will initially be skeptical, if not hostile, to the program. The principal way employees will be won over is through actual participation—“the proof is in the pudding”—and word of mouth from others who have participated. (*Chapter 5: Marketing*)
- **Nevertheless, persistence and creativity in “selling” the program can help promote employee acceptance of the program.** Essential marketing strategies include:
 - visible demonstrations of support from top management, such as participating in orienting employees to the program; (*Chapter 5: Marketing*)
 - securing buy-in from middle management and line supervisors by explaining how the program can benefit *them*; (*Chapter 5: Marketing*)
 - collaborating with the union, especially during the planning stages of the program; (*Chapter 5: Marketing; C-POST*) and
 - using multiple marketing approaches to gain the support of *line staff*, such as presenting the program during new employee training, involving line staff in planning and running the program, and counting training as credit toward officers' continuing education requirements. (*Chapter 5: Marketing; Cuyahoga County; Harris County;*)
- **Guarantee confidentiality—within the limits of the law.** Programs that fail to convince participants that nothing they say (with certain exceptions) will come back to haunt them will not succeed. To identify exceptions to confidentiality—

and then explain them to all employees—consult with a local attorney and state licensing boards. (*Chapter 6: Other Keys to Success*)

- **Make sure that stress management training sessions offer *practical* advice about how to prevent and cope with stress.** Minimize discussions about the theory of stress. (*Cuyahoga County; Harris County; C-POST*)
- **Emphasize the benefits of exercise in all stress management initiatives.** Officers report that physical activity is the most effective and common method they use to cope with stress. (*Chapter 2: Extent and Sources; Three Agencies Make Exercise*)
- **Make sure that immediate professional assistance is available after training sessions and after peer support encounters in case employees need emergency help.** (*Pennsylvania Board; C-POST*)
- **Reduce organizational sources of stress.** The major source of stress for most probation and parole officers is not the work but the organization—high caseloads, deadlines, excessive paperwork, and lack of time. (*Chapter 2, Extent and Sources*). As a result, a program will be only partly successful if it does not seek to work with management to reduce some of the stresses that the organization may be creating for employees. In addition, reducing organizational stress offers agency administrators a high visibility opportunity to demonstrate convincingly that they are committed to helping employees cope with stress on the job. (*Chapter 6, Other Keys to Success; Harris County*)

[A] program will be only partly successful if it does not seek to work with management to reduce some of the stresses that the organization may be creating for employees.

- **Assess whether the program is succeeding.** Only by evaluating the program is it possible to find out how to improve it and to convincingly show funding sources that it is worth supporting. (*Chapter 6, Other Keys to Success*)
- **Think creatively about how to minimize program costs.** Agencies have trained in-house staff to become stress management trainers rather than hiring outside trainers (*C-POST; Harris County*); used rebates from state workers' compensation claims (*Washington State*); secured grants from Federal agencies and local foundations (*Cuyahoga County; Harris County*); and made use of free technical assistance resources (see next bullet). (*Chapter 6: Other Keys to Success*)
- **Take advantage of free sources of help in planning the program.** Rather than reinvent the wheel, adapt the materials that other programs have developed and telephone program coordinators and experts for advice. (*The end of each case study in chapter 3; Chapter 6: Other Keys to Success*)

The Washington State Department of Corrections Staff Resource Centers

Brief Program Overview

The Washington State Department of Corrections (DOC) Staff Resource Centers serve correctional officers and community correctional officers, as well as civilian support staff, supervisors, and other DOC employees. The program began as an expansion of the DOC's Critical Incident Stress Management services, which previously consisted of one contract staff member. Implemented in 2000, the centers have since expanded significantly beyond their original critical incident management mission to:

- provide short-term individual counseling,
- participate in critical incident responses,
- provide training in stress management,
- train managers to recognize stress among staff,
- promote staff participation in wellness programs, and
- treat minor stress-related physical problems.

Each of the State's five administrative regions has its own Staff Resource Center, consisting of a Staff Counselor, Occupational Nurse Consultant, and Office Coordinator, all full-time Department of Corrections employees.

The Staff Resource Centers have been written into 18 departmental policies and into 12 emergency response policies. The program's approximate total annual budget of \$558,000 comes out of different agencies within the DOC.

The Washington State Department of Corrections (DOC) employs 7,000 people, including 635 community corrections officers (CCOs), dispersed in 89 offices across the State, who are responsible for all offenders who require community supervision. The DOC's Department of Community Corrections currently has 93,330 active field cases, 62,864 of which represent offenders who are currently under supervision. At 3,059 offenders per 100,000 residents, Washington State ranks second highest in the Nation—just behind Texas—in the number of individuals per capita under community supervision.

The DOC developed the Staff Resource Centers in 1999 after a survey revealed that staff stress had increased since the late 1980s. However, since the inception of the program the centers have taken on additional responsibilities besides addressing employee stress, including career development services, occupational health and safety, and employee wellness. Resource center staff conduct regular trainings, outreach, academy presentations, and vaccination initiatives in their regions. Counselors and nurses routinely travel to satellite offices throughout each region—often between facilities hundreds of miles apart.

To provide support, guidance, and encouragement through research-based interventions, and maintain high professional and ethical standards in a safe, confidential environment.

Staff counselors began tracking employee visits in aggregate numbers in 2001 and report these figures annually to the State (see the box below). During 2001, employees visited the centers nearly 6,000 times, averaging nearly 500 visits per month, or 100 visits per month per center.

| Number of Staff Resource Center Contacts, 2001 | |
|--|--------------|
| Type of Problem | Total |
| Personal | 945 |
| Family | 440 |
| Work | 2,533 |
| Educational Issues | 378 |
| Critical Incident Stress Management Defusing/Debriefing | 1,612 |
| Total Staff Assisted | 5,908 |

To maintain strict confidentiality, program staff maintain no written records of visits—unless the clinician feels there is an immediate danger to the staff person or others, in which case the individual is referred to crisis intervention services and the referral is documented (see “Securing Trust: Guaranteeing Confidentiality” in chapter 6, “Other Keys to Program Success”).

Although statistics are not kept on the job position of individuals who use the program’s services, a counselor in one region estimated that she had treated 25 community correctional officers in the previous 12 months, or approximately 9 percent of the 271 officers in the region.

Program Components

The Staff Resource Centers address four principal staff needs:

- (1) the emotional and psychological well being of employees who feel they need assistance,
- (2) the emotional needs of all DOC and other State agency employees in the event of a critical incident,
- (3) the physical health of the entire DOC workforce, and
- (4) the occupational health of individual employees who have had injuries or chronic work-related physical problems.

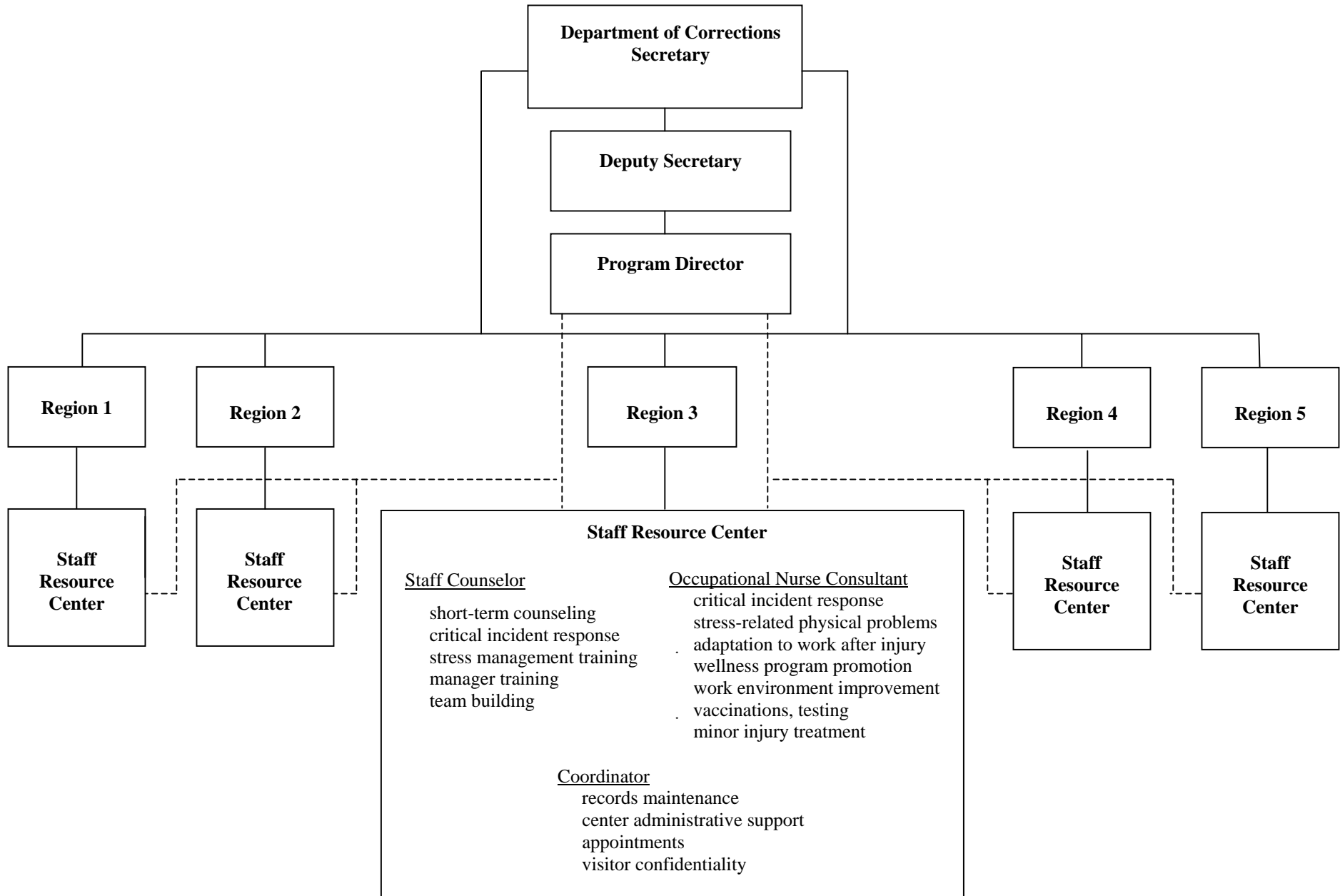
Staff Counselors

Staff counselors provide short-term individual counseling for individual DOC employees and their families, referring employees to members of an extensive network of professionals in the community for long-term services (see organization chart).

Counselors also provide:

- training for upper-level managers in recognizing inappropriate staff behaviors and substance abuse problems,
- periodic trainings at main offices and satellite offices focusing on burnout, stress management, morale, and other stress-related employee issues such as carrying sidearms (see the box “Preparing Community Corrections Officers to Carry Weapons”),

Structure of Washington State Staff Resource Centers



- team-building exercises at all department levels to improve communication and cooperation,
- interpersonal conflict resolution, and
- career development strategies to reduce staff turnover.

The percentage of time that the counselor for a region allocates to each activity varies according to the particular needs of the region. One region may be experiencing difficulties between managers and line officers and therefore require more training on conflict resolution and communication skills, while another region may require in-depth career counseling services to reduce high turnover. As a result, counselors are given a great deal of latitude in their daily activities. However, this latitude underlines the importance of careful supervision by the State program director and the regional DOC administrator (see below).

Community corrections officers in Washington State have the option of carrying a sidearm when making field contacts. Since this policy was implemented in 1998, virtually all new officers have opted for firearms training while going through the academy. Approximately 95 percent of officers cleared to enter the academy pass the course. Community corrections officers who were hired before carrying sidearms became an option must receive approval from their supervisor to apply for the training.

The Staff Resource Centers Program Director gives a mandatory one-hour presentation on stress management and potential sources of stress for community corrections officers at each of the firearms academies. The firearms academies are natural places to talk about stress management in part because there is a captive audience but also because carrying a sidearm can contribute to stress among community corrections officers who are not used to taking a handgun with them when making field contacts, are uncomfortable around guns, do not perceive—or want to recognize—that their jobs may involve a high risk of danger, or do not envisage themselves as engaging in policing.

Despite these potential stresses, the option of carrying a firearm was popular with many officers. However, it was not universally embraced by support staff, some of whom felt the weapons added to *their* on-the-job stress by making the work environment less safe. However, in the years since implementation began, support staff have become more comfortable with the firearm policy, thanks in part to efforts by the administration to address their concerns. Specifically, officers check weapons in and store them in a locked safe while in the office and only check them out when making field contacts.

As noted, in addition to individual counseling, staff counselors participate in providing critical incident stress management services to the entire DOC and occasionally to other State agencies when needed. For example, during the Seattle earthquake of 2001, the DOC critical incident stress management team (including Staff Resource Center counselors and DOC emergency response team members) was one of the first crisis teams deployed to State agencies throughout the region.

[S]taff counselors participate in providing critical incident stress management services . . . to other State agencies when needed . . . [f]or example, during the Seattle earthquake of 2001

Center counselors, already trained in critical incident stress management, in 2003 received advanced training from the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation. Staff Counselors and Occupational Nurse Consultants (the other members of each Resource Center—see below) also participate in DOC multidisciplinary emergency response exercises such as mock hostage situations.

Four of the six program counselors (one in each region, as well as the program director) are Ph.D.-level psychologists. The minimum requirement for the counselor position is a Masters degree with five years of relevant experience. The program director and the regional DOC administrator are responsible for hiring and supervising the counselors.

The Program Also Serves Family Members

Staff Counselors see family members at their own discretion. For example, if a staff member is having a problem that involves the family, the counselor may invite a family member to a counseling session. In certain situations, an officer may ask the counselor to provide immediate care to a family member because the officer has a rapport with the counselor. The counselor may then refer the family member to other appropriate resources in the community for longer-term help.

Occupational Nurse Consultants

An Occupational Nurse Consultant, a full-time DOC employee, is assigned to each Staff Resource Center. The nurses work with the Staff Counselors to help employees deal with work-related health and wellness issues. During a critical incident, the nurse serves as the second-in-command to the counselor. More generally, nurses deal with worker's compensation claims, the work environment (job conditions, physical plant), or very minor injuries. The Occupational Nurse Consultants may administer staff vaccines (e.g., for hepatitis B), treat stress-related physical problems, test for certain blood-borne pathogens and tuberculosis, and refer employees with serious medical problems to primary care physicians.

One vital role of the nurse is to anticipate officers' needs before critical incidents happen.

- In 2001, the Occupational Nurse Consultants recognized that community corrections officers in field offices needed training on the appropriate response when they discovered a methamphetamine laboratory making a field contact. As a result, the nurses contacted and collaborated with the State Department of Health and the Washington State Patrol to design and implement a curriculum for meth lab response training for officers.
- The nurses manage the Respirator Program, ensuring that officers in sensitive areas of facilities are provided with tested and properly fitted masks to prevent exposure to airborne pathogens like tuberculosis.

The training has been a success, according to one program staff person:

In the past, some of our CCOs have run into meth labs and had no idea what they were walking into, what the risks and dangers were. Personal safety is a big stressor for CCOs, and I think the availability of this training has reduced their stress and given them a sense of control.

While the nurses rarely treat acute injuries, they help employees deal with the aftermath of physical injury, including assisting them to adapt after returning to work, helping with worker's compensation claims, and preventing further injury. Staff at the Staff Resource Centers take a comprehensive approach to stress management and wellness, believing that both mental and physical health are important to overall stress management. For this reason, the nurses employ proactive and preventive measures as often as possible when an employee has been hurt and is reentering the workplace. For example, the

Occupational Nurse Consultant may review the injured employee's job responsibilities and visit the employee's work station to ensure that the person will not reinjure him- or herself.

The nurses also administer an employee wellness program, which includes encouraging staff members to participate in various wellness fairs and activities and maintaining a library of wellness materials in the centers. Wellness fairs occur annually in each region and feature a variety of local vendors, wellness seminar providers, booths for blood pressure testing, local health club representatives, and massage therapists. The wellness program is funded through vending machine proceeds and worker's compensation rebates, but it is limited in its scope due to funding constraints and the nurses' other responsibilities.

The nurses update a Resource Guide of Services for each region annually. The network includes:

- ministerial resources,
- regional agencies that provide services to officers,
- information on staff development activities, and
- critical incident stress management team information.

Staff Resource Center Coordinator

The Staff Resource Center Coordinators fill an important role in supporting the Staff Counselor and Occupational Nurse Consultant in each region by maintaining worker's compensation records and databases, including archiving past claims, vaccination records, TB test records, and flu shot registries. The office coordinators contribute significant time to some activities, particularly setting up the wellness fairs. In addition, coordinators provide administrative support to the counselors and nurses, manage the offices for the region, and maintain strict confidentiality about visitors to the center. Employees make appointments through the Staff Resource Center Coordinators, although the coordinators do not keep a record of last names.

*Employees make appointments through the Staff Resource Center
Coordinators, although the coordinators do not keep a record of last names.*

The Washington State Offender Accountability Act Created Additional Stress for Many Officers

In 1999, the State of Washington enacted legislation that changed the way Community Corrections operates throughout the State. Officers and Staff Resource Centers staff report that implementation of the changes in offender management, reporting systems, and officer accountability were sources of major stress for Community Corrections Officers. However, the aspect of the legislation that seems to have created the most concern for officers is the provision making them potentially liable when an offender under their supervision commits a new offense. Although staff point out that no officer has ever been successfully sued for financial damages under the act, the possibility looms large in the minds of many officers.

Outreach

Counselors and nurses have marketed their services extensively: one counselor estimates that she has met every single DOC employee in person in her region at least once in the past 12 months. The program director and the Department of Corrections media specialist have put together a training video about Staff Resource Center services, stress management, and officer health that is shown at all academy trainings for new recruits. The DOC uses other media to market services to DOC employees, including Powerpoint presentations and brochures. Counselors acknowledge that many officers are reluctant to use the program's services. Some officers feel that their supervisors will find out that they are experiencing problems on the job and do not wish call this kind of attention to themselves. However, one officer who has used the services reported:

“My lead officer saw me when I was leaving . . . [clinician's] office, and I didn't care. I am comfortable using the Resource Center. Some officers might see it as a weakness, but I don't.”

Another staff member who used a Staff Resource Center after a critical incident was very grateful for the services:

“The [Staff Resource Center’s] services were a great help—to have a professional right there who had the tools to help, on site and non-biased, was very important. It was also very helpful to have the nurse [Occupational Nurse Consultant], who was very good.”

Program Coordination and Support

Supervising program staff in such a large State—staff who, moreover, are given considerable latitude in choosing services to provide—requires close attention.

Counselors from all five regions meet monthly as a group to plan programming, define roles and responsibilities, and decide on future program policies. The program director facilitates these meetings, although all counselors are allowed to contribute to decisions. The Occupational Nurse Consultants also meet monthly, and a quarterly meeting is held with all staff from the five regions. An additional monthly two-hour conference call is held at the end of each month with all center staff. The program director plans to begin quarterly two-day visits to each staff Resource Center.

The DOC administration has been supportive of the Staff Resource Centers both financially and logistically. The program’s approximate total annual budget is \$558,000. Funding is entirely through the department, although it comes from different agencies within the DOC.

Each Staff Resource Center has a different physical layout, determined by the space available in the region. For example, one region’s center has an office for the clinician in the Community Corrections department and an office for the nurse at the main prison facility in the region. Another region’s center is located in a separate building on prison grounds, where all three center staff members have offices in what was once a private residence. Although this center is on the prison grounds, the entrance and parking lot are shielded by trees, making it difficult for even tower guards to see who is visiting. Each program staff member has his or her own office space and telephone line. Efforts are underway to standardize equipment, software packages, and transportation access across all five regions to ensure that each region is adequately equipped and has access to the same resources.

The Staff Resource Centers have been written into 18 other departmental policies and into 12 emergency response policies.

Since its inception, the program has been fully incorporated into the DOC organization. Many regional lieutenants support the program and use it as a resource for officers who they feel can benefit from its services. The Staff Resource Centers have been written into 18 other departmental policies and into 12 emergency response policies.

For further information, contact:

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Washington State Department of Corrections
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Walla Walla, WA 99362
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Southern California Probation Agencies' Arrangements with The Counseling Team, a Private Stress Services Provider

Brief Program Overview

Since 1991, several probation agencies in Southern California have arranged for The Counseling Team, a private mental health organization founded in 1982, to provide stress-related services to officers and support staff.

The Riverside, San Bernardino, and San Diego county probation departments have negotiated contracts with The Counseling Team for specific types of services, including:

- ***individual counseling*** (typically three to six free sessions per employee),
- ***critical incident response services*** (involving immediate on-site counseling with affected employees individually or in groups, with follow-up counseling sessions),
- ***inservice stress training*** (such as sessions on dealing with offender anger and coping with stress), or
- some ***combination*** of these services.

Other agencies have arranged for The Counseling Team to provide one-time stress-related services. For example, the Fresno County probation department has used The Counseling Team to provide peer support training for its staff. As a result, the department's executive council set up a committee, made up of a manager, four officers, and two support staff to prepare and submit a set of draft policies and procedures for a peer support program. The agency has not yet implemented the program because of concerns about liability and the need to focus attention on avoiding staff layoffs in response to a budget crisis.

Several probation agencies in Southern California have arranged for The Counseling Team, a private mental health organization, to provide stress-related services for officers and support staff. Located in San Bernardino and founded in 1982, The Counseling Team's 13 full-time and 3 part-time mental health clinicians provide stress services by contract to law enforcement and corrections departments, as well as to probation agencies, throughout Southern California (see the box "Other Criminal Justice System Agencies Use The Counseling Team").

In addition to probation agencies, a number of corrections agencies and law enforcement departments from Los Angeles to the Mexico border make use of The Counseling Team's services, including:

- 50 police and sheriff's departments and
- 17 California Department of Corrections and Youth Authority facilities.

Besides accessing its home office in San Bernardino, criminal justice system agencies can make use of The Counseling Team's branch offices in Corona, Victorville, and San Diego.

Probation agencies in Southern California have different arrangements for securing The Counseling Team's services. The Riverside (since 1991), San Bernardino (1992), and San Diego (1998) county probation departments have negotiated contracts with the organization for specific types of services. All three departments have contracted for individual counseling and critical incident response services, while two departments have also contracted for inservice training.

Services

Any contracted probation agency may request *inservice training sessions* for its personnel by calling The Counseling Team's full-time training director. For example, the San Bernardino County Probation Department arranged for a team trainer to provide a session on how to deal with offender anger and another session on stress management.

Probation staff use an 800 number to call The Counseling Team to arrange and appointment for *individual counseling*. Each staff member of a department that has a contract with the organization typically receives up to three free counseling sessions and, if there is an important clinical necessity and the department approves, up to three more sessions. Counseling Team clinicians refer officers and support staff to other counselors or to the probation department's employee assistance program for longer-term treatment.

The type of treatment Counseling Team clinicians provide is usually cognitive, brief, and reality-based therapy that focuses on current problems that are causing stress and ways of resolving them. Sessions often provide help with anger management. One Counseling Team clinician was sought out by two probation officers who had participated in a critical incident debriefing that the counselor had run. “The officers came to me,” she said, “because of anger issues: they were angry at the system, their impotence [to change it], its rules, and supervisors.” She saw each officer every other week for several months.

Probation agencies with contracts can call on The Counseling Team for on-site **responses to critical incidents**, paying between \$60 to \$125 for each hour of critical incident response time. The organization’s clinicians rotate being on call (and serving as on-call backups) for emergencies. As a result, no probation agency ever has to wait for assistance in an emergency—The Counseling Team has responded to as many as five simultaneous critical incidents among its various client agencies.

In a crisis response, a probation agency staff member typically meets with the crisis response counselor to explain what happened and identify staff who may be having a difficult time coping. The clinician then talks with each staff member individually for an hour or two in a private room. The counselor usually arranges for each officer to come voluntarily to the agency three to five days after the incident for a follow-up session. If needed, the counselor also holds a group debriefing session with affected employees.

In October 2000, a youth at the San Bernardino County Probation Department’s Regional Youth Education Facility for male juveniles died suddenly in his room. The cause of death was never determined. Three of four staff on site at the time experienced significant concerns, in part because of the unresolved nature and suddenness of the youth’s death. As a result, management immediately called The Counseling Team to send over a counselor to help staff deal with the issues raised by the boy’s death. A counselor, who arrived within a few hours, met individually with line staff. Later, a group debriefing was conducted with management, including the Corrections Bureau’s deputy chief and division directors.

Setting up a Peer Support Program

Other agencies have arranged for The Counseling Team to provide one-time stress-related services, typically trainings. The Fresno County probation department has used The Counseling Team to provide peer support training for its staff. With approximately 500 employees, over 100 of whom are probation officers, the agency decided to develop a peer support program after the director of the Fresno probation department's adult division became interested in developing a peer program because of stress-related personnel issues that were cropping up among line staff, including personal crises that had resulted in the disciplining of a few officers. The director asked Rosalinda Acosta, a probation services manager, to investigate a similar program in the Fresno police department. Acosta reported on what she learned to the agency's executive council consisting of the agency chief and four division heads (adult, juvenile, institutional, and boot camp). Based on Acosta's favorable report, the council agreed the agency needed to establish its own peer support program.

The Fresno County probation department has used The Counseling Team to provide peer support training for its staff.

The agency's first step was to send Acosta and Jeanne Starks, an officer, to be trained as peer counselors by The Counseling Team, an organization that agency administrators had heard from other criminal justice system agencies was top-notch. The agency expected the two employees to learn from the three-day training detailed information about the concept and operations of a peer support program as well as how to function as peer supporters. The agency liked the report Acosta and Starks came back with but took no immediate action.

Two years later, the department contracted with The Counseling Team to come to Fresno to conduct another peer support training. The agency sent out an all-staff e-mail asking for nominations for staff who should attend. The agency then invited 25 individuals who had received nominations from multiple colleagues to attend the two-day training,

including several support staff. Acosta and Starks also attended for a second time and again reported the positive results of the training to the executive council.

As a result, the council set up a committee, made up of Acosta, Starks, two support staff, and three other officers to prepare and submit a set of draft policies and procedures for a peer support program. Starks invited peer supporters from the Fresno sheriff's and police departments to talk to the committee about how their programs functioned and to offer suggestions for how the Fresno probation department might structure its program. The committee also based its policies and procedures on discussions Starks and Acosta had had with Counseling Team trainers during breaks in the peer support training sessions the two employees had attended. For example, the committee explored with the trainers whether to include support staff and family members in the program and whether peers should receive overtime pay if they provided support after hours.

After reviewing the plan, some managers expressed concern about what would happen to an officer's caseload when he or she was asked to help out a colleague. The council agreed that, unless it was an emergency situation, peer supporters would provide help on their own time over lunch, at the end of the day, or during the evening. In an emergency, if a peer were tied up with an offender, another peer supporter would either provide the needed help or take over the peer supporter's appointment.

The agency has not yet implemented the peer support program because some managers are concerned about liability issues related to a program—for example, what might happen if an officer told a peer that he or she was using illicit drugs. Some managers have also been concerned that, if a shooting occurred, the peers might “contaminate” the scene—again, reflecting the agency's legal concerns. Finally, the county was going through a budget crisis that distracted the council's attention from the program as the members struggled to avoid laying off staff.

For further information, contact:

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The Counseling Team
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The Harris County (Texas) Stomp Out Stress Training Program

Brief Program Overview

With a \$38,324 grant from the National Institute of Justice and matching funds from the department, the Harris County (Texas) Community Supervision and Corrections Department tested a 20-hour, four-session stress management training program for probation officers. The department involved line officers in designing how best to market the voluntary program and hired outside experts to deliver the training.

The training consisted of four modules:

- (1) An eight-hour *education* session addressed the nature of stress and burnout, how stress affects the individual, and resources for dealing with stress.
- (2) A four-hour session on *organizational issues* was devoted to understanding how the agency itself can contribute to employee stress.
- (3) A four-hour session on *individual stress factors* helped participants understand how personality can contribute to stress and how to learn to use effective coping mechanisms.
- (4) A four-hour *communications* session used instruction and role play to teach positive ways of communicating about stress at the office and in the home.

After extensive outreach and use of incentives, 86 of 300 probation officers in the department with caseloads agreed to participate in the training.

The program also trained seven supervisors in how to address stress among their staff as well as manage their own stress. Recruiting significant others was difficult; only five partners agreed to participate and only two attended all four sessions.

An evaluation showed that, six months after the training, the participants' burnout level was less than it had been before they participated in the training. The department plans to repeat the training periodically.

The director of the Harris County Community Supervision and Corrections Department at the time learned of a National Institute of Justice (NIJ) Corrections and Law Enforcement Family Support (CLEFS) grant opportunity through an Internet notice from the National Institute of Corrections. She was interested in anything that could train her

staff to do a better job. She also knew that severe budget cuts that had resulted in the loss of 500 correctional officers in the department a few years earlier created increased stress, even among probation officers who were not affected directly by the terminations. As a result, she asked Bennett Chapman, program manager at the time in the department's Staff Development Branch and director of its Training Unit, to submit a proposal to NIJ.

Because Chapman taught at the University of Houston-Downtown, to help write the proposal she was able to recruit Robert Glazier, a professor at the university who was also a clinical psychologist who had written his doctoral thesis on police officer stress. Moreover, Glazier had once been a Federal probation officer.

Training Curriculum

After NIJ awarded the grant in March 2000 (see the box "Stomp Out Stress Program Implementation Timeline"), Bennett Chapman and Robert Glazier met for several hours to come up with ideas for the training and then put their ideas into an 87-page training curriculum with handouts and PowerPoint presentations.

| Stomp Out Stress Program Implementation Timeline | | |
|---|---|--------------|
| | Grant application | June 1999 |
| | Grant awarded | March 2000 |
| | Focus group held | June 2000 |
| | Peer trainers identified | March 2001 |
| | Participants recruited | March 2001 |
| | Training calendar e-mailed | April 2001 |
| | Peer trainers trained | April 2001 |
| | Manager buy-in meeting | April 2001 |
| | Instructors recruited | May 2001 |
| <i>Training held</i> | | |
| | June 6, 8, 11 (Education Module) | |
| | June 13, 14, 19 (Individual Module) | |
| | June 20, 21, 25 (Organizational Module) | |
| | June 26, 27 (Communication Module) | |
| | Follow-up posttest | July 2001 |
| | Second follow-up posttest | January 2002 |

Chapman and Glazier felt that there were two very distinct sources of stress for probation officers: personal or individual sources, over which officers have some control, and organizational sources, over which they typically have little, if any, control. As a result, they designed one module each to address these two very different sources of stress. They decided to begin the training with an education module that discussed the nature of stress—“Stress 101.” A fourth module, on communication, was necessary to help officers talk about stress within their families. The curriculum’s four modules addressed the following areas (see also the box “Stomp Out Stress Program Curriculum”):

- (1) An eight-hour *education* session addressed the concept and nature of stress and burnout, how stress affects the individual, maladaptive ways of coping, and resources for dealing with stress.
- (2) A four-hour session on *organizational issues* was devoted to understanding how the agency itself can contribute to employee stress. The trainer helped participants identify aspects of their jobs that could cause significant stress and positive ways of coping with these sources of stress.
- (3) A four-hour session on *individual stress factors* helped participants understand how personality can contribute to stress. The principal focus of the session was learning about coping mechanisms. Participants were assisted to evaluate their own coping styles and to understand why some people end up using ineffective coping strategies.
- (4) A four-hour *communications* session focused on positive ways of communicating about stress and burnout in the home and at the office. Participants engaged in role play exercises to practice positive communication skills.

Recruiting Participants

After asking department managers to suggest staff to serve on an advisory committee, Chapman and Glazier convened a group of 31 recommended officers—representing the training’s intended audience—to address a number of potentially problematic recruitment and other programmatic issues from their perspectives as experienced officers and supervisors (see the box “Selected Issues the Focus Group Addressed” in chapter 5, Marketing the Program).

| Stomp Out Stress Program Curriculum | | | |
|--|---|--|---|
| Module 1 Education 8 hours | Module 2 Individual 4 hours | Module 3 Organization 4 hours | Module 4 Communication 4 hours |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what stress and burnout are • myths about stress • sources of stress • occupational stresses • the body's responses to stress • ineffective ways of coping with stress • resources for dealing with stress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • personal factors that influence how people think about and react to stress • coping mechanisms • defense mechanisms • personal strategies for combating stress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • organizational factors that contribute to stress • how you can deal with your health in a probation office • team building simulation¹ • the importance of working as a team • stress at this agency and ways of coping² • why some people end up using ineffective coping strategies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • review of elements of the three previous sessions • the importance of communication in relationships • positive ways of communicating about stress in the workplace and at home • role play exercises for improving communication skills in the family and at the office |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The simulation involved breaking participants into two or more small groups that compete with each other to create the most widgets from materials provided by the instructor, including scissors, string, straws, masking tape, labels, pens, cups, and a hole punch. 2. Peer trainers conducted this session and, per instructions from the program manager, interjected some of their own personal opinions and experiences about managing work and personal life while employed as probation officers. | | | |

Based in part on the focus group's recommendations, the agency marketed the program in a variety of ways, and offered a number of incentives for participating, that are identified in detail in chapter 5. For example, all staff were sent a self-executing mini-stress assessment that officers could fill out to determine how the program might benefit them (see appendix A). Trainers from the Staff Development Branch's Training Unit personally visited each of the county's eight regional offices to distribute the Stomp Out

Stress training schedule options, pass out fliers describing the program, and talk with staff.

Among other “pitches,” the trainers pointed out that the program would help officers’ significant others to understand the work-related stress experienced by the officers. The registration form asked officers whether their significant others would be interested in participating in the program and, if so, whether they would prefer to invite their significant others to attend or permit the department to mail these individuals an invitation. Chapman subsequently mailed invitations to participate to the significant others at the addresses officers provided on the registration forms.

During recruitment, some officers objected to inviting their significant others to participate (see chapter 5). Despite this and other obstacles, 23 significant others agreed to participate, in part because a number of officers felt it would be helpful to include significant others in the training to allow partners to open lines of communication with the family about work-related stress. However, only five significant others came to one or more of the training sessions, and only two attended all four sessions.

The Program

The department held the training over the period of a month, with each module offered three times in each of the four weeks (see the box “Stomp Out Stress Program Implementation Timeline” above).

Trainers

Chapman and Glazier decided that they would recruit three experienced instructors with no association with the department to provide all the training except for the organizational module (see below). All the instructors had doctorates in psychology, university teaching experience, and private clinical practices.

Chapman and Glazier felt that it would be useful to have a probation officer or supervisor co-lead the organizational module because a practitioner from within the department

could share tips at the session for controlling stress based on personal experience—and, more generally, act as a role model for controlling stress on the job. For the organizational module, Chapman chose co-trainers from among officers recommended by their supervisors based on their:

- work ethic,
- track record of having been able to cope with the stresses of the job when they were line officers or supervisors; and
- experience as trainers in the past.

Robert Glazier led a training session for the peer co-trainers to discuss the elements of the organizational module and their responsibilities in co-facilitating the sessions. In addition, Glazier spent five hours with the three independent trainers going over the training curriculum page by page. He also reviewed with them the nature of the National Institute of Justice grant and what it is like to be a community corrections officer and participate in the probation culture. Glazier sat in on some of the sessions just to ensure that the trainers were adhering to the curriculum.

Participants

Eighty-eight officers (almost 30 percent of all officers with caseloads) agreed to participate in the training. Some officers refused to sign up because they were concerned that participating would make them fall behind on their casework—especially, given their already high caseloads. Other officers did not enroll because, having been told they needed to agree to attend all four sessions, they felt they could not commit to such a large block of time including, for some, driving as many as 28 miles one way to attend each session. The vast majority of the officers who signed up—70—participated in all four sessions.

The Training Content

The participants were very guarded at first—“a tough, tough, paranoid audience” according to one trainer—perhaps because they did not want to express vulnerability in front of each other and did not trust the trainer. Initially, participants asked the trainer, “Who are you?” “Will supervisors see this?” “What will happen to the information

we're filling out?" Then some participants began expressing negative feelings about the agency, especially during the organizational module, as participants opened up about their frustrations, particularly in light of their increased caseloads after a hiring freeze had been instituted several months before. Officers expressed dissatisfaction with paperwork, not being recognized by supervisors for their work, and the lack of opportunities for promotions. The trainers emphasized that officers had to take care of themselves in order to take care of offenders and offered possible explanations for why things (such as department audits) were the way they were. The trainers also pointed out that officers needed to not just complain but plan ways to bring problems constructively to their supervisors' attention.

The participants were very guarded at first—"a tough, tough, paranoid audience" according to one trainer

Participants reported that the training sessions provided very practical advice. For example, one trainer recommended that officers make priority lists of what they really needed to do and by when, and to keep the list on their desks. One participant now makes a list regularly and reported it helped reduce stress. The participant also recalled being told how to identify the symptoms of stress so that officers can "take a step back and calm down."

I've used that [technique] quite a bit. For example, when I was teaching probationers a lesson on understanding the feelings of others, I got angry at a member of the class, felt my heart pounding, and snapped at a kid, "Well, it doesn't matter with you because you're headed for prison anyway." After I saw the look on the probationer's face, I remembered the stress training and realized that I was experiencing stress, so I apologized to him. So I recognized my own symptom of stress—snapping at the kid.

Participants reported that the training sessions provided very practical advice. For example, . . . one participant now makes a [priority] list [of what she really needs to do] regularly and reported it helped reduce stress.

The significant others joined their partners for the first, second, and fourth modules but participated in a separate organizational module. This session focused on helping them to understand their partner's job and its stresses so they could communicate effectively together and be empathetic when work issues began to have negative effects on their family life. The program managers also hoped that, by understanding their partner's work, the significant others might be able to help improve the officers' ability to cope with its stresses.

For this session, the program developed a 15-minute homemade video of actual officers role playing what they do at work, with some officers taking the parts of offenders. The video (whose dialogue is provided in appendix B) illustrates some of the stresses of the job:

- An officer hears a page, calls in, and finds out it is a judge who wants to see an offender's file right way.
- A supervisor (feet on her desk, reading a newspaper) tells an officer who comes to see her about another matter, "By the way, I noticed you haven't done all your computer entries."
- The receptionist tells an officer, "You've got another 'crazy' out here to see before the guy who wants the travel permit. There's also a call holding (from the mother of a probationer who is suicidal)."

The one training session for supervisors attracted seven participants. Two supervisors and a probation supervisor co-led the session. The group discussed management stresses, such as line officers' complaints about high caseloads and lack of equipment, and officers' perceptions of audits as a form of punishment (some overachieving officers were upset at what they felt were the auditors' minor criticisms of their work). The group also discussed supervisors' lack of options for relieving stress among line officers who suffer from high caseloads.

The trainers suggested strategies managers could use to cope with their own stress:

- identifying "a buddy" with whom they could talk when they were experiencing excessive stress;

- setting limits on what they could realistically do for line officers with high caseloads whom they supervise; and
- helping staff understand that audits were intended to make sure that employees were complying with agency policies.

Follow-Up

Robert Glazier evaluated the results of the training on the burnout level of the 31 participants who completed all four sessions and participated in all three surveys (baseline, posttest, and longer term follow-up). The evaluation revealed that over half the participants were burned out before they began the training. One month after the training, their level of burnout—especially, their level of emotional exhaustion—was significantly reduced. However, six months after the training, some of their burnout had returned. Nevertheless, the officers' burnout level after six months was still less than it had been before they began the training. Chapter 6 provides additional information about the evaluation design and findings.

Bennett Chapman and Robert Glazier presented senior management staff with the anonymous complaints participants in the training expressed about organizational sources of stress. As a result of concerns about the department's audits, management agreed to reexamine the form and pay considerably more attention to the process—including temporarily halting a point rating system because it caused officers so much stress.

The total grant award to the Harris County Community Supervision and Corrections Department was \$38,324, with most of the money used to pay for the three independent trainers and for Robert Glazier to help prepare the proposal and curriculum, train the trainers, and evaluate the results of the pilot test. The department provided \$34,000 in in-kind services consisting largely of Bennett Chapman's time. The department plans to repeat the training multiple times at periodic intervals because of the positive evaluation results, officers' need for help in reducing stress, and the low cost of doing it again. Chapman estimates that, by using peer trainers, it will cost the department only \$100-\$200 for supplies and refreshments each time the program is provided to a new class of 25 officers.

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The Cuyahoga County, Ohio, Juvenile Court Comprehensive Wellness Program

Brief Program Overview

The Cuyahoga County Juvenile Court, with approximately 100 juvenile probation officers, serves the city of Cleveland, Ohio, and surrounding communities. The court received a \$50,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Justice's National Institute of Justice to develop a pilot program addressing stress among juvenile probation and juvenile detention officers and supervisors. The resulting nine-month Comprehensive Wellness Program consisted of nine all-day training sessions focused on wellness, relationship skills, anger management and conflict resolution, and financial planning.

The Juvenile Court contracted with the Center for Families and Children to conduct the training. A steering committee consisting of selected employees who volunteered for the training reviewed the training curriculum and schedule, and resolved problems that arose during the training (e.g., participant tardiness). Sixty officers were recruited to participate in the program, including 26 probation line officers and 4 probation supervisors.

Almost all participants, surveyed anonymously, reported that they found some value in the program; 81 percent reported they felt they had improved their ability to cope with work-related stress. The program was also associated with statistically significant reductions in participants' self-reported physical and psychological symptoms of stress.

In 1999, the Cuyahoga County Juvenile Court in Cleveland, Ohio, was experiencing increases in the severity of the offenses committed by juvenile offenders entering detention and probation supervision. In addition, according to Renee Edel, a senior program planner at the court and eventual manager of the stress program, "because the statutes that govern juvenile courts in Ohio embody the potential for political upheaval" (employees are not protected by civil service but serve at the pleasure of the judge), court staff saw that a program was needed to "instruct staff in how to detach from the unpredictability produced by ongoing organizational change." At the time there was "a climate of deep uncertainty due to the fact that several top-level administrators (court administrator, department heads) had been fired for political reasons." As a result, court administrators, anticipating an increase in employee stress, decided to apply for a stress

program grant through the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) Corrections and Law Enforcement Family Support (CLEFS) program.

As part of the grant application process, Renee Edel began researching the effects of stress on employees. Through interviews with randomly selected staff members, human resources data on absenteeism, and an extensive literature search, Edel learned that stress among staff in the Juvenile Court was more severe than originally thought. Furthermore, a focus group consisting of Juvenile Court staff members indicated that the agency was experiencing problems with job dissatisfaction. Human Resource Department records indicated there were high levels of absenteeism, turnover, and medical leave.

The \$50,000 NIJ grant, awarded in January 2000, was matched by a State grant of \$50,000. Through a competitive bidding process, the court selected an outside contractor, the Center for Families and Children, to develop the program and arrange for an individual to conduct focus groups and exit interviews of program participants. The court also contracted with an independent researcher to evaluate the program by testing participants before and after the training. Finally, the stress program manager assembled a steering committee consisting of probation and detention employees with some training experience (all of whom participated in the training) that met monthly to review the training curriculum and schedule, and, later, to offer suggestions for addressing problems that arose during the training (see chapter 5, Marketing the Program).

The court . . . contracted with an independent researcher to evaluate the program by testing participants before and after the training.

Program Marketing and Recruitment

Although the Comprehensive Wellness Program was originally intended to be mandatory for randomly selected juvenile detention and probation officers, administrators made participation voluntary after a few employees objected to being forced to participate. After the design change, the Center for Families and Children sent representatives to each satellite probation office to give a presentation about the program and solicit volunteers.

In addition, officers and supervisors all received flyers about the program, with tear-off registration forms attached. Although the initial mandatory attendance policy was made voluntary, some managers appear to have strongly suggested to certain officers that they participate. Support staff and upper level management were not included in the program, but line supervisors were encouraged to volunteer.

The Program

The Juvenile Court prepared an overview of the Comprehensive Wellness Program for the National Institute of Justice grant application. After the award, the Center for Families and Children designed the detailed program elements and curriculum, and lined up presenters for the training sessions. An independent consultant employed by the center who had a background in behavioral health and wellness designed and conducted focus groups with selected employees before the training began and debriefing sessions with participants at the end of the program.

Spouses and Significant Others Were Invited—but Failed—to Participate

Significant others were included in the program, but they were recruited somewhat differently than officers. Program staff were concerned that, because a request to participate from the Juvenile Court to family members would seem heavy-handed, family members would be reluctant to volunteer. Instead, the Center for Families and Children mailed spouses and significant others an invitation to attend the program orientation and any (or all) of the individual sessions. However, no spouses or significant others chose to attend. Both the program manager and the project steering committee suspect that the daytime scheduling of the orientation and trainings may have prevented most of them from participating.

The main program components were:

- initial focus groups to solicit staff contributions about how to design the program;
- an employee steering committee to fine tune the curriculum and training schedule, and troubleshoot problems during the sessions;
- a pre/post test designed and implemented by an independent researcher;
- nine all-day training sessions; and
- a post-program 30-minute “consultation session” with each participant to debrief and develop an individualized wellness plan for the future.

The sessions were held once a month at an off-site retreat center. Each session, provided twice per month to separate groups of 30 probation and detention officers, focused on a different topic:

- **Nourishment of Mind and Body** This first session, in conjunction with the following two sessions, laid the foundation for other sessions by teaching participants to “open up,” listen, breathe, and practice a few basic yoga techniques.
- **The Road to Renewal** The second session continued the focus on relaxation and deep breathing, and then taught participants about physical and mental wellness.
- **Mind-Body Connection** The last session in this series of three introductory sessions wrapped up the physical and spiritual components of the program by teaching participants about stress prevention and management, and about making healthy lifestyle choices.
- **Relationship Strategies** Participants were given a personality test and then discussed the results and the implications of individual personality types for healthy relationships.
- **Relationships** A licensed social worker discussed how relationships begin and evolve, and potentially become volatile. Participants were instructed in how to maintain good professional relationships.
- **Effective Communication Skills** This session began a three part series with a professional motivational speaker who taught techniques for communicating well with colleagues and supervisors.
- **Anger/Conflict Management Basics** The second session in the series laid out basic strategies for successfully resolving conflict.
- **Anger/Conflict Management at Work** The last session in the series gave specific instruction on handling professional disagreements and work place confrontations.
- **Financial Management** The ninth and final session helped participants learn to manage their finances, invest wisely, and make the most of their paychecks.

The Comprehensive Wellness Program Identified Specific Goals before Implementation

For Officers

- To identify sources and symptoms of stress, as well as identify available personal and organizational resources for treating stress among officers and their families.
- To increase staff morale and the level of job satisfaction.
- To decrease staff turnover, medical leaves, and absenteeism (as indicators of job stress) among officers.
- To increase the level of family satisfaction.

For Supervisors

- To enhance the ability of supervisors to recognize the signs of stress among officers.
- To increase supervisors' skills and comfort in assisting officers with stress-related problems.

The topic areas were chosen based on the results of the initial focus groups with selected employees and a review of the probation and detention employee stress literature. Because the program was a pilot, administrators decided to offer an array of topics in order to explore which stress management methods probation and detention officers would find most helpful.

The initial three sessions, taught by a physical therapist and a certified yoga teacher and mind-body educator, were the most nontraditional, focusing on relaxation techniques such as yoga, aromatherapy, breathing exercises, and meditation. Participants reported that these techniques were by far the most helpful aspect of the program for coping with both personal and work-related stress. However, the final session on financial management was the most popular of the nine sessions. According to one participant:

“They held a session on finances that a lot of us would have liked to be longer. There was a lot of interest in it. They taught us different ways to save money.”

Program Participation

Sixty juvenile detention officers and probation officers participated in two groups of 30 members each. The sessions were held on different Fridays, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., for

each group. During the sessions, supervisors or other employees filled in for participants, some of whom, according to program staff, were happy to do the extra work rather than attend.

Attendance was a problem with some participants, particularly detention officers whose schedules are less flexible than those of probation officers even though the grant provided for overtime pay for relief officers. In addition, some officers who felt they had been coerced into participating were less likely to attend all nine sessions. One participant indicated that the off-site location also contributed to absences—putting up with rush hour traffic to get to the retreat center was a deterrent. Although only 18 of the 30 detention officers attended every session, 28 of 30 probation officers participated in all nine.

Four probation line supervisors attended the sessions and reported that the program had substantial benefits (see the box).

Participation by Supervisors Improved Communication

One of the four supervisors who participated in the program asked all the line officers in her “team” of employees to participate. This not only helped the individuals on the team but also, according to the lead trainer, gave the team consistent ways to communicate—a “common language” to use—with each other. The supervisor reported that communication improved both among the officers and between the officers and the supervisor.

Another supervisor, half of whose team members participated, said that communication and problem solving had improved between her and those of her staff who completed the program.

Supervisors observed on their post-program surveys that inappropriate expressions of work-related stress and absences from work due to stress decreased significantly during the training period, while the ability of staff to use supervisors as a resource improved significantly.

[A] . . . supervisor, half of whose team members participated [in the training], said that communication and problem solving had improved between her and those of her staff who completed the program.

Follow-Up

The findings from the four components of the program evaluation (described in detail in chapter 6, Other Keys to a Successful Program) were uniformly positive:

- (1) A pre- and post-program evaluation of stress levels among 29 participants (20 probation officers and 9 detention officers) who answered the surveys showed a statistically significant overall reduction in physical and psychological stress measures after the training compared with before the training.
- (2) A survey of all 60 participants' opinions about the program found that:
 - Almost 67 percent felt that by the end of the program they had already used some of the lessons they had learned during the training. Of these, nearly 90 percent felt they would continue to use these lessons.
 - Over 81 percent indicated they had improved their ability to cope with work-related stressors.
- (3) There was a nonstatistically significant decrease in absenteeism rates during the program's operation compared with the three-month period before it began.
- (4) During individual 30-minute debriefings with each participant after the program, 88 percent reported positive changes from having participated in the program; 92 percent said they would recommend the program to other employees.

During the debriefing, a social worker helped officers formulate a wellness plan and coached them to follow up on their plans (see the wellness action plan form in the box).

**Debriefing Session Form for Recording Each Participant's
Action Plan for Wellness**

1. While participating in the Wellness Program, I recognized that my stress comes mainly from _____.
2. My goal is to minimize this stress using _____ techniques. I will plan to start using these techniques by _____ (date). If I get "stuck," I will contact _____ (name) for support.
3. The action steps I will take to put this plan in motion include: _____

The program's total budget was \$100,000, including a \$50,000 grant from the National Institute of Justice and \$50,000 provided by the Juvenile Court. The exact cost breakdown follows:

| | |
|---|----------------|
| overtime pay for relief staff in the detention center | \$49,680 |
| travel | \$1,645 |
| trainers | \$39,500 |
| independent researcher | <u>\$9,175</u> |
| | \$100,000 |

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**The Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole
Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT)**

Brief Program Overview

The Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole, with 56 offices throughout the State, has 1,050 employees, including 440 field agents. In 1999, the board established a Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT) in cooperation with the State Office of the Victim Advocate (OVA).

High-level board and OVA staff assemble rapidly after a critical incident to determine the proper response to the event. Once the board chairman approves activating CIRT, the Team, along with the OVA's CIRT Team Coordinator and the Victim Advocate, work with local management to address the crisis, assisting in assessing the needs of the immediate victims, their families and close coworkers, and coworkers in general. They work with local management to develop a plan for support, assistance, and intervention for those in need. The board selected the community crisis intervention model developed by the National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA).

A formal group intervention can last 60 to 90 minutes and involves asking participants to remember what they felt at the time of the incident, their feelings since the incident, and how they think they may feel in the immediate future. The focus of the intervention is to help participants gain cognitive control and an understanding of what has happened. At a minimum, two Team members lead each intervention, including a facilitator and a note taker.

The board initially recruited and trained 31 Team members, 28 of whom were still active after nearly three years. Team members include parole agents, immediate supervisors, clerical support staff, and Office of the Victim Advocate staff.

It appears that, while still "a work in progress," CIRT has become a permanent board program due to widespread management and line staff support and because the approximate annual cost of maintaining it is only about \$11,000.

The Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole, with 56 offices throughout the State, has 1,050 employees, including 454 field agents and 92 institutional agents. The board is directly responsible for 24,100 offenders, 80 percent of whom are on parole.¹ Board members (except for the chairman) spend three to four days a week in prisons conducting

¹ The board supervises two kinds of probationers: probationers from two counties in the State that do not have probation offices, and probationers referred by judges who, because of special circumstances, prefer not to see them supervised by the county—for example, a county commissioner placed on probation for driving while intoxicated.

parole hearings. The board's central office, located in the State capital, Harrisburg, established the Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT) in 1999 in cooperation with the State Office of the Victim Advocate (see the box).

The Office of the Victim Advocate (OVA), an independent agency whose Victim Advocate is appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the senate, provides services to crime victims in the post sentencing process. While OVA is an independent agency, it is housed in the Board of Probation and Parole and receives administrative support from the board.

The board recognized that OVA, because of its experience working with victims of crime, could be a significant asset in the planning and operation of the Critical Incident Response Team. As a result, even though CIRT is a board creation, OVA has been indispensable to its development and interventions.

Program History

In 1993, after an offender shot a parole supervisor in the back during a routine office contact, many staff grumbled about how there had been no caring response from the board. As a result, in 1997 the board and Victim Advocate began discussing the need to provide a humane response after a critical incident. However, in September 1997, before any actual planning had begun, two parole agents shot and killed an absconder who had fired at them in a dimly lit basement. Because of media reports accusing the agents of using excessive force, the event represented a crisis for the board and galvanized it into a quick response.

The newly appointed chairman of the board, along with OVA's appointed Victim Advocate, immediately assembled a group of board employees to help out the two directly involved agents and four other agents who were present at the house. In effect, the board and OVA, relying on instinct, common sense, and good intentions, assembled an ad hoc response that—although largely effective—showed the need for responding

very rapidly to such incidents in the future in an *organized* manner through a *formal* program.

As a result, in November 1997 the chairman of the board asked another newly appointed board member to form and co-chair with the Victim Advocate a planning committee tasked with developing a Critical Incident Response Team Protocol (see “Chronology of CIRT Team Development”). The board member and Victim Advocate recruited every individual to the committee who might play a significant role after a critical incident, including senior board staff such as the Director of Probation and Parole Services, Regional Directors, the Director of Human Resources, representatives of agents in the field and in institutions, and additional members of the Office of the Victim Advocate. Several staff who had been personally involved in critical incidents also served on the committee. The board adopted the committee’s protocol on March 15, 1999 (appendix C provides the protocol).

| 1993 | supervisor shooting occurs |
|----------------|---|
| 1995 | Governor appoints several new board members and Victim Advocate |
| September 1997 | two agents involved in return-fire incident kill an absconder |
| November 1997 | board puts together Critical Incident Response planning committee |
| March 1999 | board adopts committee’s Critical Incident Response Protocol |
| April 1999 | board solicits applications to the CIRT Team |
| September 1999 | 40-hour training for CIRT Team members |
| January 2002 | Team members begin providing mandatory training on CIRT to all agency staff |

The CIRT process involves three overarching steps:

1. activating the Team (if the assessment shows the need);
2. providing the intervention(s); and
3. providing follow-up.

How the Team Is Activated

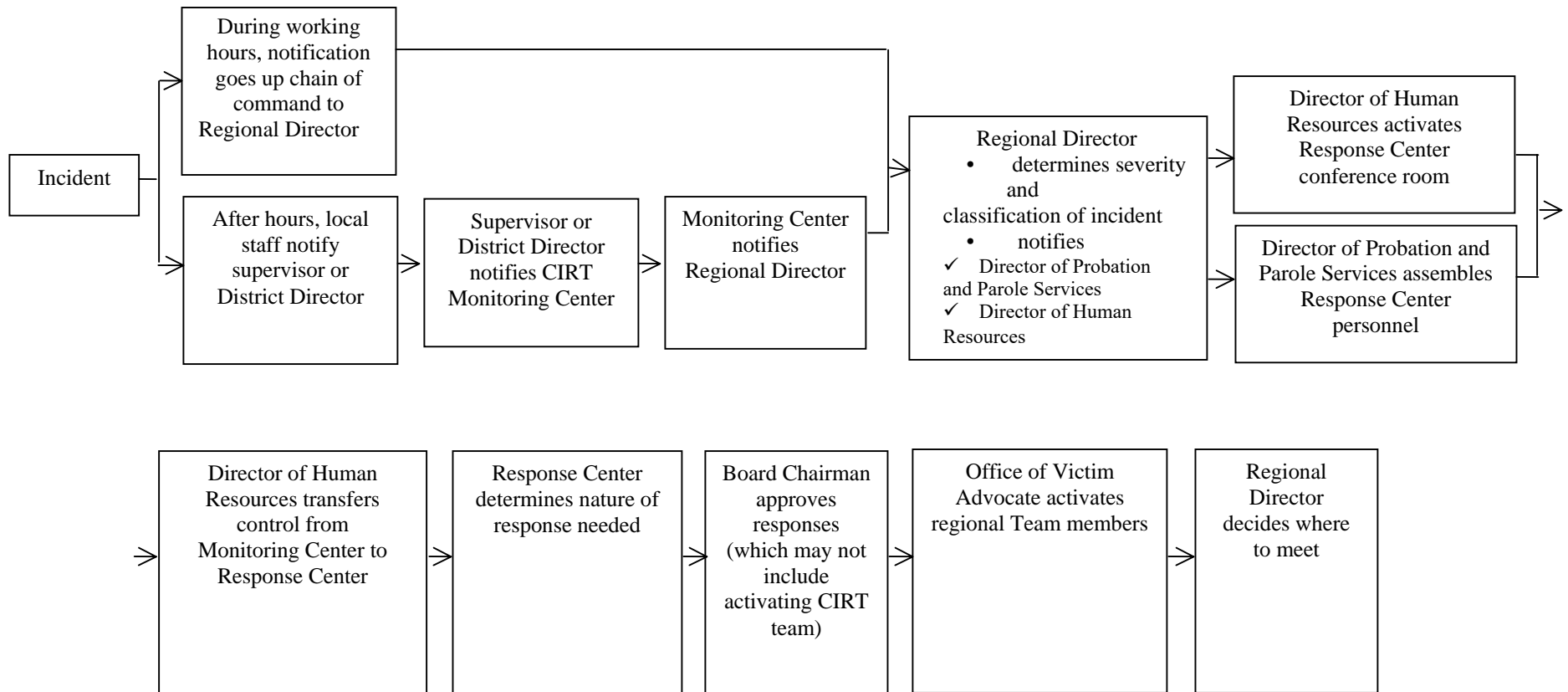
The flow chart on the following page shows the steps in the activation process. Staff members typically report a critical incident during regular business hours through the established chain of command and during nonbusiness hours to the board's 24-hour emergency Monitoring Center toll-free 800 number. The Monitoring Center, located at the board's central office in Harrisburg, is an initial point of contact for all staff for the after-hours notification of critical incidents. The Monitoring Center—which makes no decisions—collects and records information as it comes in and shares it with other personnel, including the appropriate Regional Director and District Director, and the victim's immediate supervisor.

When a Regional Director learns of an incident in his area, he triages the event by:

- making the initial identification of victims and other people on scene affected by the incident,
- making the initial determination of the classification of the incident (see the box “CIRT Has Four Classifications for Incidents”), and
- determining its severity.

The Regional Director then notifies the Director of Probation and Parole Services and the Director of the Bureau of Human Resources. The human resources director sets up the Response Center conference room and technology. The probation and parole services director gives the board chairman and senior management staff (see the box “Members of the Response Center”), and the Victim Advocate, a brief description of the incident and instructs them to report to the Response Center conference room. If the Monitoring Center has been involved because the incident occurred after hours, it maintains contact with the Regional Director, board chairman, and senior and ancillary board staff until the Response Center is operational and the human resources director transfers operations from one center to the other.

Process for Assessing a Critical Incident and Activating the CIRT Team



The program has four ways of categorizing incidents to help determine whether to activate the CIRT Team. Generally, the Regional Director of the office where the incident occurs decides what category an incident falls into, but, if activated, the CIRT Response Center may change the definition as further information about the incident—and the victims—becomes available and is examined.

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Critical Incident | Any situation that forces a person to face vulnerability and mortality or that potentially overwhelms a person's ability to cope. Death, serious bodily injury or threat of death or serious bodily injury shall, in all cases, be considered a critical incident. <u>The CIRT Team is always activated.</u> |
| Major Incident | An incident causing displacement of staff, loss or destruction of Board or personal property, and requiring activation of the Response Center and substantive Board decision-making and resources. <u>The CIRT Team may be activated.</u> |
| Minor Incident | An incident handled within the district with local resources but reported through the chain of command. <u>The CIRT Team is not activated.</u> |
| Unfounded | An incident did not occur. <u>The CIRT Team is not activated.</u> |

The Response Center is the decision-making body that manages, coordinates, and supervises the response. Located adjacent to the board chairman's office, the Response Center has available:

- a bank of four telephones so that, if someone calls the center's unpublished, dedicated telephone number with additional information and one phone is busy, the call automatically rolls over to the next phone;
- materials, such as the Critical Incident Response Protocol and a list of the names and telephone numbers of all Team members; and
- computer capabilities for accessing criminal justice system records, such as information about parolees.

Senior management staff who make up the Response Center staff include the following:

- board secretary (maintains contact with board members)
- chief counsel (advises on legal matters)
- director of human resources (handles employee issues)
- director of the office of communications and legislative affairs (handles media)
- director of the office of management services (addresses financial issues)
- director of the probation and parole services (assigns or reassigns staff)
- director of the office of professional responsibility (handles internal affairs investigations)
- Victim Advocate (coordinates victim assistance)

If there is no time to assemble Response Center staff—for example, if the Monitoring Center learns of an incident at 3:00 a.m.—the probation and parole services director telephones the board chairman, who may give instructions to activate the CIRT Team before Response Center members can meet to avoid any delay in providing needed immediate assistance.

The board chairman maintains overall and final decision-making authority over staff and the response to any incident. Not every response involves activating the CIRT Team. The former chairman did not usually activate the Team if it was clear that the local office could handle the problem—for example when:

- a staff member's husband fell through a roof on his construction job;
- a staff member's daughter was in a serious traffic accident; and
- an offender sent an agent a letter threatening to kill him.

The board chairman maintains overall and final decision-making authority over staff and the response to any incident. Not every response involves activating the CIRT Team.

Once the chairman decides to activate the Team, he communicates the decision to the Victim Advocate. She notifies the Office of the Victim Advocate CIRT Team

Coordinator. The Team, along with the CIRT Team Coordinator and the Victim Advocate, work with local management to address the crisis, assisting in assessing the needs of the immediate victims, their families and close coworkers, and coworkers in general. They work with local management to develop a plan for support, assistance, and intervention for those in need. The board selected the community crisis intervention model developed by the National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA).

Providing the Intervention²

As shown in the box, the former chairman activated the CIRT Team nine times, primarily for shootings and suicides.

| 1998 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clerical staff member murdered in her apartment • family member of clerical staff person murdered |
|-------------|--|
| 1999 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • suicide of parole agent's live-in partner with board-issued handgun • clerical staff member hit by car as she leaves the office |
| 2000 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • parole agent and center director shot at by parolee during routine office visit • parole agent's family member murdered |
| 2001 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clerical staff member killed by former partner |
| 2002 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supervising parole agent commits suicide with board-issued handgun • employee dies natural death 30 days after retirement |

After the CIRT Team members whom the CIRT Team Coordinator has activated have arrived on scene, the Regional Director joins them to provide an update on the status of the situation. The group decides which individuals need assistance and whether the assistance will be rendered individually or in a group intervention. If there is a group

² The program avoids using the word “debriefing” because the National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA), which trained CIRT Team members, follows a protocol that incorporates the techniques of crisis intervention used in victim assistance programs and offers these services as an individual or group crisis intervention, as appropriate.

intervention, the CIRT Team members decide which Team member will be the facilitator who leads the intervention and which member will be the “the scribe” who takes notes on a flip chart. Usually the District or Regional Director then assembles the staff for the intervention or asks supervisors to assemble them (see the box, “Who Attends the Interventions”).

The Critical Incident Team leader decides whether to make the intervention mandatory or voluntary and whether agents and clerical staff should attend together. For example, in one intervention the leader decided to make the session optional for agents but mandatory for clerical staff. On the one hand, one employee felt this represented unwise “splitting” of the staff; on the other hand, he observed that the incident involved a clerical worker and occurred at a location far removed from the workplace.

There may be instances in which clerical staff who feel angry toward agents or supervisors would feel more comfortable talking among themselves—and vice versa. For example, in an intervention provided in response to clerk supervisor’s murder, the on-site CIRT Team decided to hold two interventions, one for support staff and one for agents, because the Team was concerned that some support staff might wish to “vent” about the agents’ reaction but not wish to express anger in their presence.

The basic format of each intervention (see appendix D) is as follows:

1. Introduction
2. Ground Rules
3. Intervention
 - (a) ventilation and validation
 - (b) predicting the future and preparing for it
4. Summary of the Intervention
5. Closing the Group.

Before the intervention begins, the facilitator asks participants to turn off their cell phones and pagers and then explains that nothing that is said in the room leaves the room and that the notes on the flip chart will be destroyed at the end of the meeting. The facilitator then asks participants where they were when the incident happened and how they learned about it. The group may then focus on several topics, such as the following, depending on the participants’ concerns and the nature of the incident:

- **Validation.** According to the Victim Advocate CIRT Team Coordinator, “A lot of validation goes on—letting participants know that their feelings are common responses to trauma and they are not a ‘bad person’ if, for example, they are feeling angry at the victim.”
- **Education.** If staff are feeling guilty that they did nothing to prevent the incident, the facilitator may need to explain, for example, how people who commit suicide can be very adept at hiding their anguish so that other staff have no way of knowing the suffering that suicidal people are experiencing—and therefore have no opportunity to intervene.
- **Tips for approaching the victim.** Participants in the intervention who are “secondary victims” (e.g., witnesses) sometimes ask how they should approach the primary victim when he or she returns to work. The facilitators help participants to think about their concerns for the victim and their thoughts about how the victim may feel, and to consider how to make the victim and themselves feel comfortable after everyone has returned to work.

At the end of the session, which typically lasts 60 to 90 minutes, the facilitator uses the information the scribe has recorded on the flip chart to summarize what participants said.

Follow-Up

The Team may provide one or more different kinds of follow-up support after each intervention depending on the need. After two interventions, victims needed *immediate professional counseling* which the director of the Bureau of Human Resources arranged through the Governor’s office manager who oversees the State’s employee assistance program contractor.

After two interventions, victims needed immediate professional counseling which the director of the Bureau of Human Resources arranged

As needed, Team members follow up each intervention with *calls and e-mails to staff who were most involved in the incident* or appeared to be upset during the intervention.

- The day following and for about four weeks thereafter, members of the Team called and e-mailed an agent who had been shot at to see if he needed anything. The board chairman at the time personally called him twice.
- One year after the incident in which two agents returning fire killed a probationer, the board chairman sent an anniversary memorandum to all employees providing the telephone numbers of the Office of the Victim Advocate and the State Employee Assistance Program in case if they needed support.

The board and the Office of the Victim Advocate never discussed including family members in the program—their involvement was a given from the start. The Critical Incident Response Protocol makes clear that CIRT serves family members as well as employees:

“Board Chairman maintains overall . . . authority over . . . [the] response to any incident involving Board staff *and resulting impact on their families.*” [emphasis added]

Comments staff have written on their evaluations of the training on CIRT given to all new employees make clear that the trainers emphasize the centrality of serving family members:

- “It’s comforting knowing that if something traumatic does happen there are people who can help you, and especially your family, deal with it.”
- “[It is] reassuring to know of the support available to my family.”

Two critical incidents illustrate the extent to which the CIRT Team watches out for family members.

- After an offender fired almost point blank twice at an agent nearly hitting him both times, CIRT Team members asked him, while they were taking him to the police station for questioning, if he wanted them to arrange to take his wife home from work, because she was too upset to drive after the agent had called to tell her what had happened. He said yes. When the agent returned home later that afternoon, two Team members were still there providing support to his wife and children. Later, the agent’s wife told him that having the Team members drive her home and stay with her until he returned was very helpful: “She said she did not know what she would have done if they had not been there.”
- After a supervisor committed suicide, three Team members, after calling ahead, went to the home of the supervisor’s sister-in-law, where his wife had gone. One Team member spent time with the supervisor’s two teenage sons so that the other Team members could talk alone with the wife and sister. The Team stayed for several hours and helped talk through the wife’s questions about how and why such a horrendous thing could happen. One Team member drove the sister to the grocery store to buy food and drinks in order to provide lunch for the family members and friends who were beginning to assemble at the home.

Finally, in keeping with the National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA) model for community crisis intervention, *Team members themselves meet together among themselves* immediately after each intervention to debrief. The Victim Advocate CIRT Team Coordinator usually runs the debriefings, which typically last about 30 minutes. The debriefings serve two purposes.

1. As one Team member reported, “Team members get wrapped up during the intervention hearing all the stories, so you feel you know the victim—you’re drawn in.” As a result, the debriefing is used primarily to make sure that none of the *Team members* need support, especially since they are bound by considerations of confidentiality not to discuss what transpired during the intervention with colleagues or even family members.
2. Members also discuss how well the session went. In addition, if Team members have been dispersed to different sub offices in a region to conduct separate interventions, only by meeting together afterwards can all members gain a complete picture of how staff are coping with the incident.

CIRT Responds to the Unexpected Suicide of a Well-Liked Parole Supervisor

A parole supervisor who worked in the Reading office killed himself at home on a Sunday with his service handgun. After consultation between the Director of Probation and Parole Services and the Board Chairman, the District Director was called Sunday evening to tell him the CIRT Team would be at the Reading office at 8:00 a.m. That evening, the Victim Advocate CIRT Team Coordinator paged local Team members to explain the incident and ask if they were available to help.

A Team member who was an institutional agent received the call at home at about 10:00 p.m. that Sunday from the coordinator asking if she could meet in Reading the next morning. After getting off the phone, the agent telephoned her supervisor at home to ask for permission to go; the supervisor said he would take care of canceling her appointments on Monday morning. The agent got up at 3:30 a.m. on Monday to make the two-hour trip in the dark to the office and met at 8:00 a.m. with the other members of the Team.

When they met early Monday in Reading, Team members shared what they knew about the incident and decided who would go to the victim’s home and who would facilitate the interventions (one to be held in Reading, one in nearby Allentown).

The Team set up a staff meeting for the next day in Reading. The District Director told his supervisors to call agents and support staff to invite them to the meeting, especially agents in the field who would not normally be coming in to work that day. A number of them said they did not want to go, but the supervisors told them, “We want you to be there—give it a chance. You don’t have to participate. The CIRT Team has been trained, and *I* don’t know what to say to you.” All of the staff not on vacation, sick, or at hearings showed up, including the District Director.

The lead Team member for the intervention was the civilian head of a division in another office who was also a licensed clinician. Another Team member stayed near the door in case anyone who left needed support. On two occasions, participants did leave, visibly upset, and the Team member followed each one outside. Each participant used the bathroom, said he or she was OK, and returned to the meeting.

During the intervention, some staff talked about how, because they had not seen any signs of distress in the supervisor, the suicide made no sense to them. In addition to addressing this incomprehension, the intervention made it possible to give the staff credible, reliable information about what happened.

The next day, Tuesday, the Team held an intervention in Allentown to make sure the rest of the district staff were not unduly affected. Later in the week, several Team members went back to the Reading office to see how everyone was doing because, when they had arrived on Monday, two clerical staff and one agent had been having a particularly difficult time coping with the traumatic event.

Training and Marketing the Team

The board has taken great pains to ensure that CIRT Team members are thoroughly trained and that all agency staff are familiar with the program’s existence and services.

Team Members

The board initially recruited 31 Team members, 28 of whom were still active after three years. The 28 Team members include:

- 11 parole agents,
- 4 parole agent supervisors,
- 4 clerks,
- 4 non-parole agent administrators (e.g., a secretarial supervisor), and
- 5 Office of the Victim Advocate staff.

The program used a formal screening procedure for recruiting and screening CIRT Team members (see chapter 4 for detailed information about the selection procedure). The board arranged for the National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA), in Washington, D.C., to provide Team members with its 40-hour community crisis intervention training that concludes with participants role playing crisis intervention sessions both as facilitators and “victims.” (Chapter 4 provides detailed information about the NOVA training, and appendix E provides a detailed outline of the curriculum.)

The board arranged for the National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA), in Washington, D.C., to provide Team members with its 40-hour community crisis intervention training.

Marketing the Program

The Board of Probation and Parole engaged in an intensive effort to make staff aware of CIRT’s existence and services. Over the course of a year, selected CIRT Team members provided a series of four-hour orientations to different offices across the State to:

1. familiarize staff with the program, including how the CIRT Team is activated and what services it provides, and
2. familiarize staff with the names and faces of at least some Team members in their regions so that, when a Team showed up after a critical incident, not all its members would be complete strangers to the staff.

The board has also added an orientation to CIRT as part of each new employee’s basic training (see chapter 5, Marketing the Program).

Support staff have been included in the program with the same degree of attention that agents are given because they can experience as much stress after a critical incident as agents can. For example, after some incidents in which agents have been victimized, offenders call the secretaries about their appointments—creating stress and uncertainty for the secretaries in terms of what they are supposed to tell the callers. Because support staff participate in the interventions, Team members can address these concerns.

Support staff are mandated along with agents to attend the staff orientations to CIRT. One clerical worker participating in the board's orientation program for new employees said the presentation "made me feel the board was behind me and cared about me no matter what my job title."

As the following vignette illustrates, the CIRT Team has been called out several times because of incidents that directly involved support staff.

In 2001, a clerical worker was killed by her estranged boyfriend. After the Response Team had met and the board chairman approved an intervention, two CIRT Team Members went to two of the city's sub offices in region where the victim had worked after first calling ahead to tell them about the meeting and explaining that the Regional Director had made attendance mandatory for clerical staff. One office had only one clerical staff person, but the Team members on their own went around to talk one-on-one with the five agents in the office. The Team members then drove to the second office where they met with the five clerical staff in the office, some of whom knew the victim well.

Support staff have been included in the program . . . because they can experience as much stress after a critical incident as agents can.

The Future

CIRT is still "a work in progress." For example, the board and OVA still need to:

- orient administrators throughout the State to the program's operations and provide them with a working definition of "victimization" so they know when to—and when not to—request that the Team be activated;
- determine what kinds of program records to keep that will balance the need for privacy and confidentiality with the need to document the program's achievements; and

- develop a policy for removing CIRT members from office (for example, if they become “burned out”).

However, it appears that CIRT is a permanent fixture in the agency. Already, it has improved the board’s image among staff at all levels throughout the State. Even if the four highest officials involved with the program—the board chairman, Director of Probation and Parole Services, Human Services Director, and Victim Advocate—were to leave their positions (and the board chairman already has), there are enough other committed board managers, as well as strong support from the Regional Directors, to keep the program without the board’s support.

Finally, now that the expense of the initial training of Team members by NOVA has been incurred (see the box), the annual cost of maintaining the program is a relatively modest \$22,000 for pagers for Team members plus occasional overtime (generally, the interventions take place during normal working hours).

All CIRT funding comes from the board's general operating budget personnel costs. CIRT Team expenses from September 1999, when the program began, through the August 2002, have been a little over \$50,000. These costs have included:

- a one-time first-year cost of approximately \$17,721 for the NOVA training,
- an annual cost of \$9,300 for leasing pagers for 31 Team members, and
- overtime pay of about \$5,208 for Team members who provided services after hours.

Budget Breakdown

One-time training of 31 participants

| | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| NOVA training fee | \$7,212 |
| room rental/refreshments | \$1,012 |
| lodging | \$6,417 |
| subsistence (estimate) | <u>\$3,080</u> |
| Total training expenses | \$17,721 |
| Pagers | \$27,900 |
| Overtime | <u>\$5,208</u> |
| TOTAL EXPENSES 1999–2002 | \$50,829 |

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California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (C-POST) HeartMath Training

In 1999, in response to a legislative mandate, the California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (C-POST) arranged for HeartMath, a private stress management education, training, and research organization, to conduct and evaluate a pilot two-day training for 90 juvenile correctional peace officers and institutional parole agents.

HeartMath randomly assigned the 90 volunteers to a training group and a control group. The organization administered four written tests, along with tests of blood pressure, heart rate variability, and other stress-influenced physiological conditions, one month before the training and again three months after the training.

The principal training topics included:

- evidence of the role stress plays in contributing to coronary heart disease;
- Freeze-Frame, the core HeartMath method that trains people who experience negative emotions as a result of a stressful experience to change quickly to a positive response that reverses the effects of stress on the mind and body (during breaks, participants practiced the technique on five laptop computers); and
- a stress-reducing exercise called “intuitive listening.”

Three months after the training, the trained officers demonstrated a number of improvements in physiological variables, and psychological and work-related measures, that control group members did not exhibit. The projected annual health care savings were four times greater for trainees than for control group members—\$699 versus \$175.

The cost of the training, testing, and research was \$215,000. C-POST incurred additional costs to pay overtime to participants to attend the training. However, HeartMath conducts half-day and one-day trainings (without the research component) for \$7,500-\$8,500 for any group of as many as 30 public sector employees.

In 1995, the California legislature enacted a bill that requires the California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (C-POST) to develop a training standard for stress reduction for all California Department of Corrections and California Youth Authority correctional peace officers and institutional parole agents.

Program History

C-POST chose HeartMath, an educational, training, and research organization in Southern California (see the box “HeartMath Has Provided . . .”), to pilot test and evaluate a training program because of the scientific evidence the organization has collected documenting the effectiveness of its methods of reducing stress among a wide range of employees.

HeartMath, located south of San Francisco in Boulder Creek, California, with about 60 salaried staff, has two divisions:

- The Institute of HeartMath, a nonprofit corporation founded in 1991, studies the physiological mechanisms by which the heart influences information processing, perception, emotion, and health.
- HeartMath LLC, a for-profit, limited liability company, develops and sells stress management products and provides training.

HeartMath LLC has provided stress management training for public and private sector clients ranging from human services organizations to Boeing, British Petroleum, and Sony. The organization evaluates all its trainings. For example, it evaluated a training for 64 police officers from seven California law enforcement agencies in which the participants were exposed to simulated stressful policing scenarios while wearing 24-hour Holter (heart) recorders. The evaluation found that the officers’ heart rates returned to baseline faster when they used the core HeartMath relaxation technique compared to when they did not use the technique.

Program Planning

Initially, C-POST asked HeartMath to demonstrate its two-day standard stress management training to about 90 State-level correctional administrators, educators, and trainers, as well as to facility wardens, selected institutional supervisory staff, and selected line officers and parole agents. HeartMath deliberately asked C-POST to recruit a significant minority of “cynics”—participants who could be expected to feel that the training would be “bunk.” However, as HeartMath hoped, the skeptics were won over by

the demonstration, and their “conversion” served to convince C-POST and senior Department of Corrections and Youth Authority administrators to ask HeartMath to pilot test and evaluate the training with a sample of 300 adult and juvenile correctional peace officers and parole agents.

Before conducting the training, C-POST administrators and Joseph Sundram, the lead HeartMath trainer for the pilot test, had to address the concerns of two groups.

- Wardens were concerned that officers and agents might use the baseline evaluation data (see “Research Design” below) to file worker disability claims against the Department of Corrections and Youth Authority. (Some officers had already done so based on test results from their family physicians.) As a result, Sundram assured the wardens that the training would focus on the need for officers to take responsibility for reducing their stress rather than casting them in the role of victims of a stressful occupation.
- Local chapter union leaders expressed concern (a) that managers might gain access to the participants’ baseline test data and use the information against the officers and (b) that C-POST might use the data to construct standards that would make it difficult for officers to file successful worker’s compensation claims.

Another obstacle related to funding. In 1999, when the training was first planned, the State was flush with funds. However, as time passed, a budget deficit that developed forced every State agency to trim its budget by 25 percent. The HeartMath training program barely survived. C-POST managed to maintain it by deciding to recruit only 100 officers and agents instead of the originally planned 300 and to exclude officers and agents from adult prisons to reduce the costs of providing training at two different locations.

Recruitment of Participants

Joseph Sundram, who would be the lead trainer, along with a C-POST staff member, traveled nine times to the three participating Youth Authority facilities to explain the program to officers and agents, provide empirical evidence of its effectiveness, assure them that all the data would be kept confidential, and encourage them to volunteer. The C-POST staff member explained that the training would take place off-site and, unless

they worked the day shift, participants would receive overtime pay for attending—a significant incentive for some officers to participate.

[U]nless they worked the day shift, participants receive[d] overtime pay for attending—a significant incentive for some officers to participate.

Nearly all the officers and agents—115—signed up to volunteer. However, according to one officer, many of them were reluctant to show up for the pre-test because they were concerned that administrators might gain access to information about their personal health, lifestyles, and stress levels and use the information against them. As a result, only 91 officers and agents (out of a hoped-for 100) showed up for the baseline testing.

Research Design

HeartMath used a pre-post research design involving random assignment of volunteers to the training group and to a “waiting” control group that received the training after the intervention group had been trained and retested. HeartMath randomly assigned 46 officers to the control group (see chapter 6, Other Keys to Success, for additional information about HeartMath’s evaluation design).

HeartMath and C-POST agreed that any participants whom the baseline data revealed had a serious medical problem would be dropped from the program and referred for help. This happened with one officer whose tests revealed a dangerously low level of cardiac function. The testing physician arranged immediately for the person to see a cardiologist the following day.

It is standard HeartMath procedure to identify in advance mental health practitioners and social workers in the local community who can address any severe adverse emotional reactions that participants may develop during the training, such as flashbacks to past traumatic events aroused by the training. HeartMath’s in-house, on-call crisis workers are also available for same-day or next-day appointments should an urgent need arise during the training. If a non-urgent medical problem arises during training, HeartMath works with the individual’s personal physician to address the problem.

HeartMath tested all the volunteers one month before the training and three months after the training. The tests included four pencil-and-paper tests along with tests of five physiological conditions:

- adrenal stress inventory—in particular, levels of cortisol (an adrenal hormone);
- heart rate variability;
- blood pressure;
- fasting blood sugar level; and
- fasting cholesterol level.

The Training

The description below is of the two-day training held on April 7 and 8, 2003, for 28 correctional peace officers and institutional parole agents, including 18 men and 10 women. Fourteen participants were white, 10 African American, and 4 Hispanic or Asian American. A second group of 16 officers was trained on April 10 and 11. The participants included seven institutional parole agents. Both trainings were held in a hotel in Stockton, California, within driving distance of the participants' three juvenile facilities.

The curriculum is based on an “off-the-shelf” HeartMath product that includes several standard exercises and addresses several key concepts (see the box “The Key HeartMath Training Concepts”). However, individual trainers tailor the curriculum to the background and needs of each specific audience in terms of language, emphasis, use of technical terminology and vignettes, and sharing of personal experiences.

Monday Morning

As participants arrive for the training, Joseph Sundram, the lead HeartMath trainer, hands each officer a folder with the results of his or her baseline written and physiological tests taken one month ago along with the average test results for all participants (including the controls) and for the Nation as a whole. Sundram then introduces Lee Lipsenthal, a physician and consultant to HeartMath who uses the organization's stress management materials and concepts in his cardiovascular practice and research.

1. Lifestyle changes ***that you can make*** can help control the 50 percent of the risk of heart disease that is not hereditary.
2. Negative emotions in the brain send messages to the heart ***that damage it***. In turn, the heart sends messages to the brain that ***impair rational thinking***.
3. Common sources of stress are not the events in our lives but rather our ***perceptions*** of them and ***responses*** to them.
4. Unless short circuited, cortisol levels and heart rate variability that are stimulated by negative emotions remain high—continuing to do damage—***long after the event*** that triggered the negative feelings is over.
5. By changing our negative perceptions and responses to events, the HeartMath Freeze-Frame technique ***reduces the amount of time*** it takes to allow cortisol levels and heart rate variability to return to normal after a stressful event.

Lipsenthal says he will spend the morning focusing on coronary heart disease. “Look at the person to your right: one of you is going to die from it [nervous laughter].” He asks the participants to read their individual baseline wellness profiles and points out that they scored much higher than the national average on several measures:

- high blood pressure: 23 percent compared with about 10 percent nationally for this age group (mid-thirties to mid-forties);
- high blood sugar: 26 percent versus 13 percent for the Nation;
- overweight: 87 percent versus 60 percent.

Almost half (47 percent) have a high overall cardiac risk. “The only good thing in this group is low cigarette use—5 percent,” Lipsenthal observes.

Almost half (47 percent) [of the participants] have a high overall cardiac risk. “The only good thing in this group is low cigarette use—5 percent,” Lipsenthal [a trainer] observes.

Lipsenthal proceeds to show and explain a series of slides that diagram the process of coronary heart disease. For example, one slide shows low density lipoproteins (LDLs) entering an artery: “LDL cause inflammation of the artery, and plaque then develops to protect the artery, but the plaque keeps on growing and narrowing the artery.” After explaining how smoking, high blood pressure, and stress increase the risk of heart

disease, he discusses five ways of reducing this risk (see the box “Ways of Reducing the Risk of Heart Disease”).

Lee Lipsenthal discusses—and answers questions about—five ways people can reduce their risk of heart disease.

1. ***Don’t smoke.*** Question: “Does chewing tobacco have the same effect as smoking?” Answer: “Yes, except there’s no carbon monoxide.” Question: “If you stop, can you get better?” Answer: “Yes, but only after five years—if you don’t gain weight.”
2. ***Lower cholesterol.*** “Low density lipoprotein (LDL) is the key thing to look at. But the more heart disease in your family, the lower the rate you should have.”
3. ***Exercise.*** “This reduces blood clotting and blood pressure, and uses cholesterol.”
4. ***Eat a low fat, high fiber diet.*** “Go for whole grains: white rice is just carbs [carbohydrates] with no nutritional value or fiber. The difference in vitamins in whole wheat flour versus white flour is huge.”
5. ***Manage stress.*** “This reduces adrenaline, triglycerides, and platelet stickiness.”

After a break, Lipsenthal says, “About half your risk of heart disease is a combination of heredity, being male, and age—you can’t change those things. You *can* control the other half through lifestyle changes.” He then discusses how diet, exercise, and stress management can help control cholesterol and provide other benefits for the heart, noting that “HeartMath techniques [for stress control] alone can reduce systolic pressure by 10 points and diastolic by 5 points.” Lipsenthal talks about obesity and then discusses good nutrition.

The final morning session is a discussion about the relationship of emotions to physical health. Lipsenthal addresses four harmful components of stress:

1. ***Hostility and anger*** (“They increase cholesterol and platelet stickiness.”)
2. ***Anxiety*** (“How many of you had some anxiety last week? If you didn’t raise your hand, you’re lying.”)
3. ***Depression*** (“Forty percent of people who have heart attacks were depressed beforehand; 43 percent become depressed afterward.”)
4. ***Social isolation*** (“This group scores low on this.”)

Using slides, Lipsenthal explains how the brain and heart “speak to each other” by means of the nervous system, a core HeartMath principle. The messages the heart sends the brain profoundly influence perception, emotion, behaviors, performance, and health. In turn, the heart’s output is influenced by our moment-to-moment emotional experience. In particular, *the brain influences heart rate variability*—the changes in the length of time between individual, consecutive heart beats—as distinguished from the pulse rate—how many times a minute the heart is beating. (For example, two people may both have a resting pulse of 60 beats per minute, but one person may have roughly the same length of time between the 60 beats—say one second—while the other person may have ½ second intervals between half his or her heart beats and 2 second intervals between the other half.) A high rate of variability predicts heart disease, including sudden cardiac death and hypertension. Negative emotional states can increase heart rate variability. Positive emotional states, from rosary prayers to mantras, from petting a dog to practicing HeartMath relaxation techniques, can reduce heart rate variability and therefore reduce the risk of heart disease.

So you see “Stuart”—who you can’t stand—coming down the tier; how do you protect yourself [from damaging your heart by getting angry]? Change your emotions—don’t get angry. You’ll learn how to do this over the next day-and-a-half.

The principal HeartMath trainer, Joseph Sundram, concludes the morning session by explaining that the group needs Lipsenthal’s scientific explanations and medical evidence of the relationship between emotions and heart disease “so that the afternoon doesn’t sound like just touchy-feely junk.”

Monday Afternoon

After lunch, Sundram begins by saying that the purpose of the training is so that “You can keep your jobs without giving up your lives.” He then introduces a theme he will repeat throughout the remainder of the training: what causes stress are not events but rather *our perceptions of them and responses to them*, such as the perception of being under time pressure and the feeling of lack of control. Negative perceptions and responses, he says, “form circuits in your brain—neural circuits—and these circuits

influence our perceptions; a circuit board literally develops. Everything you feel forms a circuit. But you can rewrite some of these circuits.”

[W]hat causes stress are not events but rather our perceptions of them and responses to them, such as the perception of being under time pressure and the feeling of lack of control.

The rhythm of the heart controls how much access we have to the brain’s cortex. Erratic signals from the heart cause the brain to lose its capacity for *rational* thought because the person cannot fully access the cortex part of the brain; just the *feeling* part of the brain operates. Negative feelings, such as anger, also put the adrenal glands into high gear, raising cortisol levels, which both damage arteries and impair the cortex—again making clear thinking difficult. Furthermore, unless short circuited, these cortisol levels remain high after the event that triggered the feelings is over. As a result, “anger at somebody destroys the system—even if you’re right.” Sundram shows the electrocardiogram of a police officer engaged in a simulated search of a warehouse for a potential breaking and entering which documents how the officer’s pulse and heart variability rates remain elevated long after the search is over. Sundram cautions: “You can’t avoid stress; the idea is to come back to normal quickly after the incident is over.”

Sundram asks for a volunteer, whose finger he hooks up to a device attached to a laptop computer. The computer screen—projected onto a large movie screen in front of the class—displays her pulse rate and heart rate variability. The software lets people monitor their heart rates while they try to relax. The screen shows her pulse to be 74. “That’s pretty good,” Sundram says. “Let’s change that. I want you to count backwards from 200 by 13.” The volunteer gets tense, and her pulse jumps to 85 and then to 103, while her heart rate variability goes haywire. Then Sundram shows how, by practicing a relaxation technique, how her pulse and heart rate variability decline.

Sundram asks for a volunteer, whose finger he hooks up to a device attached to a laptop computer The volunteer gets tense, and her pulse jumps to 103, while her heart rate variability goes haywire. Then . . . , by practicing a relaxation technique, . . her pulse and heart rate variability decline.

Sundram tells the participants to hook themselves up to this computer and four others at the back of the room during the break to test their heart rate variability and attempt to reduce it by using a relaxation technique to “get in the zone” of optimal health and performance. “The goal is spending more time in the zone,” Sundram explains. “The more you practice being in the zone, the more you create circuits to be in the zone—it becomes the normal, and eventually you’ll stay in the zone automatically.” During a break, different participants hook themselves up to the computers, while others watch.

When the training resumes, Sundram makes arrangements for the participants to rotate taking the software home to practice with. The rest of the afternoon is devoted to a method of getting “in the zone” called “Freeze Frame,” the core HeartMath stress reduction technique. *The goal of the Freeze-Frame exercise is to quickly change a negative response to an event into a positive response that reverses the effects of stress on the mind and body* (see the box “Freeze-Frame: The Core HeartMath Relaxation Technique”).

Freeze-Frame is the central technique that HeartMath trains people to use to reduce their stress levels and the harmful effects of stress on the heart. Freeze Frame has five steps:

1. Recognize your negative emotions and stressful feelings, and then ***take time out***—that is, Freeze-Frame a stressful situation (like freezing one frame in a movie) in order to “step out of it.”
2. Take four or five ***deep, gentle breaths*** “from the heart,” shifting your concentration to your heart as if it could breath.
3. Make a sincere effort to ***recall a positive feeling*** and feel it again. Write down two or three of your best memories to use for this purpose, and consciously activate one of them.
4. Ask yourself what would be ***an efficient, effective attitude or action*** that would reduce your stress.
5. Quietly ***sense any change*** in your perception or feeling and sustain it as long as possible.

Sundram has the group practice the technique and then asks, “How many of you felt your stress levels go down?” Most raise their hands. “If you practice for two weeks, your blood pressure will go down. Do Freeze-Frames 30 to 60 seconds several times a day.”

Sundram ends the day by passing out a packet of materials that includes a 10-minute music relaxation tape HeartMath developed that he says will help the participants to calm down by putting them in the zone. The tape, which consists of four segments of music, also makes it easier to get to sleep. He suggests everyone try it out that night.

Tuesday Morning

Sundram resumes by showing two short ABC and CNN tapes of shows that highlight HeartMath techniques being used successfully by, respectively, police officers and high school students. He teaches another relaxation exercise called “Asset/Deficit” that involves comparing reactions to events when the responses are based only on negative feelings (e.g., anger, fear) rather than based on positive feelings (e.g., acceptance, learning). He has participants pair up to practice and discuss the technique.

Tuesday Afternoon

After lunch, participants again practice the Freeze-Frame technique at the laptop computers. Sundram then plays the music tape he distributed the day before and participants close their eyes and listen to the music.

A final exercise, on “intuitive listening,” is designed to help participants listen closely to what someone else is saying, because stress can often make people miss what other people are saying—or what they *really* mean regardless of their words (see the box “Practicing Intuitive Listening”). The result is even more stress for listener and speaker alike.

At 3:00, Sundram ends the training by thanking the participants and asking them to honor the time they spent at the training by practicing the techniques they have learned at the training for at least a month.

HeartMath teaches how to listen to other people in a focused and uninterrupted manner designed to understand what the other person is truly trying to communicate—and is feeling.

Sundram splits the group into pairs and assigns them to practice the technique:

1. One person in each pair speaks for one minute without interruption from the other person. The listener does not think about his or her own thoughts but focuses on what the speaker is really saying.
2. The listener takes a minute to mirror back to the speaker his or her understanding of what the speaker was saying and meaning.
3. The original speaker indicates whether the listener’s understanding was correct and, if not, where it went astray.
4. The pairs spend the last minute saying anything they want.

One speaker begins the exercise by telling his partner, “My ‘thing’ is patience—I have no patience. I have standards and expect everyone to live up to them.” At the end of the exercise, Sundram has them reverse roles and practice the exercise again.

Sundram asks what the experience was like. One participant says, “When I was talking, he [the other member of the pair] heard things I didn’t say but was feeling or meant.”

Sundram again emphasizes that they need to practice the technique—“it won’t happen in one sitting, so keep it up.” He suggests that in their work and home lives, when someone wants to talk with them, “Take five seconds to decide whether you’re ready to really listen. If you aren’t, tell the truth and offer an alternative—‘Can we talk at 3:00?’ That way you eliminate the stress of ending up angry at yourself and the person for having agreed to talk when you didn’t want to. But if you agree, pay full attention.”

Program Costs and The Future

The cost of the training, including training four Youth Authority staff to become HeartMath trainers (see below), was \$215,000, about half of which was taken up by training costs and the other half by the research (including the testing). C-POST incurred additional costs to pay overtime to participants who could not attend the training during their regular shifts.

HeartMath conducts half-day and one-day trainings (without the research component) for \$7,500-\$8,500 for any group of as many as 30 public sector employees (\$12,000-\$15,000 for corporate clients) depending on the materials used, plus travel and lodging expenses for the trainer and participants. The organization also offers a series of four telephone training sessions for \$375 for individual employees or small groups of employees.

Three months after the training, the trained officers demonstrated a number of improvements in physiological variables, and psychological and work-related measures, that members of the control group did not exhibit.

- There were significant reductions in total cholesterol in both groups but reductions in LDL (the “bad” cholesterol) only among the trainees.
- Heart rate and both systolic and diastolic blood pressure were significantly reduced among the trainees but not in the control group.
- There were significant reductions in fatigue and anger, along with increased productivity, motivation, goal clarity, and perceived manager support among the trainees but not among control group members.

The reduction in health risk factors among the trainees was projected to save \$699 annually for each trained officer but only \$175 for each officer in the control group.

After reviewing these findings, C-POST may develop a mandatory stress management training standard covering all 800 California Youth Authority correctional peace officers and 100 institutional parole agents, and all 22,000 California Department of Corrections correctional peace officers and 2,500 institutional parole officers—including first and second line supervisors (sergeants and lieutenants).

Joseph Sundram trained four officers and agents to conduct future trainings themselves using the HeartMath curriculum. Three of these four staff replicated the training program with the control group. Sundram sat in on these sessions and, after they had ended, gave the staff suggestions regarding specific areas of their training delivery they could work on for any future trainings they may provide for other Youth Authority correctional peace officers and parole agents in their respective institutions.

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Three Agencies Make Physical Exercise a Major Focus of Their Approach to Stress Management

Brief Program Overviews

Three probation and parole agencies have made physical exercise the centerpiece of their stress management programs or have proposed policies to encourage physical exercise.

- The Montana Department of Corrections is developing a policy that would require that most of the agency's 170 probation and parole officers pass an annual physical fitness test both to promote their safety and to reduce their stress. Incentives include \$150 for exercise-related expenditures. Officers who fail would be asked to develop an improvement plan and take the test again in 90 days.
- The Boulder, Colorado, Department of Probation chief probation officer and four supervisors encourage all 20 officers, and 14 officers in another office, to exercise during working hours. Supervisors set an example, as well as go from office to office before lunch to urge staff to get out and walk, bike, or run.
- The South Carolina Department of Probation, Parole, and Pardon mandates an annual physical fitness standard for all 200 probation and parole officers. Although not a department goal, reduced levels of stress are likely to result as officers continue to exercise in order to pass the test each year.

Three probation or parole agencies have required or strongly urged their staff to become involved in regular physical exercise. These efforts are especially significant because, as reported in chapter 2, Extent and Sources of Probation and Parole Officer Stress, exercise is the most common method probation and parole officers contacted for this report say they use to reduce stress.

The Montana Department of Corrections

In 2000, the Montana Department of Corrections drafted a policy and procedure that would require most of the department's 170 probation and parole officers, as well as most of its 550 correctional officers, to pass an annual physical fitness test—the Cooper Fitness Assessment. In addition to sit-ups, push-ups, and a 1.5-mile run, the test includes

a heart rate measurement after three minutes of stepping in place. Michael Ferriter, the Community Corrections Division Administrator, and Chad Field, the division's training officer, support the test in part because officers who are physically fit are more likely to be able to ensure their own and others' safety than out-of-shape officers but also because they knew that regular exercise could help reduce officer stress.

The proposal would give officers two years to comply with the policy. The policy would provide for exemptions from the entire test or just specific components for officers who provided a physician's note indicating they had a relevant medical problem. In addition, nurses would exclude officers whose blood pressure exceeded 150/95 right before the test.

A pilot test of the policy occurred in August 2002. Of 124 probation and parole officers covered by the policy, 78 remained eligible for the test after exemptions because of a doctor's note, high blood pressure readings right before the test, a court appearance, or sick or funeral leave. (A few officers had "white coat hypertension" and, once they were given the opportunity to settle down, were retested and permitted to take the test.) Two-thirds of the 78 officers passed. All managers agreed to take the test voluntarily—indeed, a 50-year-old female bureau chief recorded the best score.

It appeared that many officers ended up enjoying the testing, which was given during working hours. Officers cheered each other on to perform well. Some officers were frustrated that their blood pressure readings precluded them from taking the test. However, some of these officers found out for the first time that they might have hypertension and made appointments to see their doctors the very next day.

[Some of these officers [tested by the Montana Department of Corrections' Community Services Division] found out for the first time that they might have hypertension and made appointments to see their doctors the very next day]

The proposed policy would require officers who fail the test to meet with their supervisors to develop an improvement plan (e.g., walk briskly for 20 minutes four times a week) that would be sent to a department trainer to review. The department would give officers who failed the test 90 days to take a make-up. Officers would not have to pass the test on the make-up but they would have to show improvement. While the proposed policy states that failure to pass the test “will result in disciplinary action,” the nature of the discipline is still under discussion. Furthermore, the department is considering revising the scoring so that officers who scored especially well on one component of the test could use their high score to offset a failing grade on another component of the test.

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The Boulder County, Colorado, Department of Probation

The Boulder County Probation Department has been focusing on stress reduction and wellness as a management priority since early 2001, shortly after the department hired Rob Bresciani as Chief Probation Officer. In addition to Bresciani, the department has a staff of 20 officers in Boulder, 14 officers in Longmont, 4 supervisors, and 6 support staff.

The most significant direction that the management team, consisting of Bresciani and the four supervisors, has taken to reduce overall stress and improve wellness among employees is to encourage exercise during working hours. Every employee is encouraged by his or her supervisor or by the chief probation officer to take a walk at lunch, ride a bike, go for a jog, or participate in any other physical activity that provides stress relief for them. Supervisors and Bresciani do the same, making a point of walking,

hiking, running, or biking at lunch. Employees have access to showers and are encouraged to bring exercise gear with them to the office.

Officers, managers, and support staff all indicated that the health-conscious community of Boulder County helps their efforts to incorporate physical fitness and wellness into their office environment. According to one officer, “Boulder is very liberal and broadminded. The vibe of the place has trickled down to officers. It is more touchy-feely here; that even comes out in the clients.” In addition, the area’s temperate climate and the proximity of walking and hiking trails facilitate taking outdoor breaks throughout the workday, throughout the year.

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The South Carolina Department of Probation, Parole, and Pardon Services

In March 2001, the South Carolina Department of Probation, Parole, and Pardon Services instituted a mandatory annual physical fitness standard for all approximately 500 probation and parole officers. Officers have two test options:

1. The first option draws on elements of the Cooper Institute’s Physical Fitness Norms for Law Enforcement. To pass, officers must accumulate eight points across three categories: push-ups, abdominal crunches, and a 1.5-mile run.
2. The second option requires officers to complete a three-mile walk in one hour.

Before taking either test, the department distributed a screening form to officers to identify medical problems that might interfere with the testing. Officers with potential medical problems were given an exemption after providing an explanation from their

physicians. Most officers in every age category, and even some pregnant officers, passed the screening easily.

According to Mike Nichols, the department's administrator of the physical fitness policy, officers who chose the first option and passed did very well in two categories—abdominal crunches and push-ups—but poorly on the 1.5-mile run.

Although the exercise standards are very new to the department, so far the response has been positive. Approximately 200 officers have been tested, and very few have failed. Officers who fail are retested after 90 days. If the officer fails again, a retest is offered after another 90 days. Agents, regardless of their test scores, are permitted to adjust their work hours (e.g., come in late or leave early) up to two-and-one-half hours a week in order to engage in some type of exercise.

Agents [with the South Carolina Department of Probation, Parole, and Pardon Services], regardless of their test scores, are permitted to adjust their work hours (e.g., come in late or leave early) up to two-and-one-half hours a week in order to engage in some type of exercise.

The department did not institute the fitness test in order to reduce officer stress. The department was concerned that the officers—all of whom have arrest powers—meet minimum standards of fitness in order to safeguard their safety on the job. In addition, the department is hoping that the fitness standards will help reduce absenteeism due to physical ailments. However, while reducing stress is not the object of the fitness standards, it is likely to be a by-product for many officers because, in order to pass one of the two tests every year, many officers will have to remain in good physical condition by exercising regularly.

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Chapter 4: Program Staffing and Training

Recruiting, screening, training, and monitoring stress program staff are of the utmost importance because addressing issues revolving around employee stress requires confidentiality, sensitivity, empathy, and a high level of interpersonal skills.

Programs may formally advertise for professional stress staff, but they often end up recruiting them based on personal relationships or through word of mouth. Programs typically recruit peer supporters—in-house staff who provide nonprofessional stress services to their colleagues—by placing a notice in agency newsletters and websites, or by e-mailing staff asking for candidates. Agencies then carefully screen applicants to make sure they have the necessary interpersonal skills (e.g., good listening skills) and do not have inappropriate reasons for volunteering (e.g., expecting overtime pay).

While professional staff typically have the clinical or training skills required for working in a stress program (although they may need some background information on the nature of probation and parole work), ***peer supporters require extensive training*** in how to help their colleagues.

Some agencies train supervisors to recognize signs of stress among officers and teach them how to refer the officers diplomatically to sources of help.

While the organization and structure of the stress program are important, it is staff talent and dedication that make or break the program. As a result, recruiting, screening, training, and monitoring program staff—the subject of this chapter—are of the utmost importance.

Recruitment and Screening

Programs typically recruit and screen professional staff differently from the way they recruit and screen in-house peer supporters.

Professional Staff

Programs sometimes formally advertise for professional stress staff. Renee Edel, Senior Program Planner with the Cuyahoga County (Ohio) Juvenile Court, issued a request for proposals to secure a provider to run the court's Comprehensive Wellness Program. She contacted past awardees of stress program grants from the National Institute of Justice to locate prospective bidders. She also placed notices in two newspapers, mailed notices to universities, hospitals, and employee assistance programs throughout the county, and sent notices to stress management consultants found on the Internet. However, the court received only three proposal submissions, only one of which was suitable.

Perhaps partly as a result, *programs frequently end up recruiting outside staff based on personal relationships or through word of mouth*. For example, because Bennett Chapman, former director of the Harris County (Texas) Stomp Out Stress training program, taught at the University of Houston-Downtown, she was able to recruit Robert Glazier, a professor at the university, to develop the training curriculum. Chapman also knew that Glazier was a clinical psychologist with a private practice who had written his doctoral thesis on police officer stress and had once been a Federal probation officer—an ideal background for developing the curriculum. Chapman then asked Glazier to recruit three experienced instructors with no association with the probation department to provide the training. Glazier chose instructors who had doctorates in psychology, university teaching experience, and private clinical practices.

Several probation agencies in Southern California have hired The Counseling Team, a private organization of mental health practitioners who have been providing stress services exclusively to criminal justice system practitioners since 1984, because of its reputation throughout the region. The agencies become familiar with the organization through word of mouth from other agencies, including police, sheriffs, and corrections departments.

While The Counseling Team's clinicians have developed extensive experience working with criminal justice system practitioners, some probation and parole agencies have

found that the clinicians and other outside consultants they have used to provide stress services are sometimes handicapped by their lack of familiarity with the nature of probation and parole work.

- Renee Edel, the Senior Program Planner who supervised the Cuyahoga County, Ohio, Juvenile Court's Comprehensive Wellness Program, advises that "[W]hen possible, use speakers who are from the justice field or who are at least familiar with the issues faced by justice personnel. Speakers from the corporate world do not appear to work as well with the officers."
- Bennett Chapman hired independent clinical psychologists to provide the training because, as a scientific study, she wanted individuals with no connection with the agency providing the service. In the future, however, she would use in-house training staff "because they understand the department more. They would have gotten a better response among participants, who would have felt more comfortable with someone who understands them."
- Staff of the Washington State Department of Corrections Staff Resource Centers found that employees were particularly receptive to services provided by in-house staff because employees did not have to spend time describing the role of probation officers in law enforcement. As one employee reported, it was "a relief to go in and know the counselor already understands what I do."

Partly because of the drawback of using individuals to provide stress services who do not have a background in the criminal justice system, some agencies have developed in-house peer supporter programs.

Peer Supporters

Programs typically recruit peer supporters—in-house staff who provide nonprofessional stress services to their colleagues—by placing a notice in agency newsletters and websites, or by e-mailing staff with the announcement. Pennsylvania's Board of Probation and Parole advertised the position of Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT) member in the board's newsletter, informing prospective candidates either to contact the Bureau of Human Resources or their District Director's office for an application or to access the application in the board's intranet public folder. As the closing date for applications approached, the board sent two e-mails reminding everyone of the deadline. The board required applicants to provide three references on the application as well as their office director's permission to participate on the team.

The board also sought out certain individuals to invite them to apply for the positions. According to one of the nine board members, “You need to purposefully choose some team members—that is, invite some people to join rather than wait for them to volunteer.”

The board appointed a recruitment and selection subcommittee to review each application, conduct an initial screening, and forward the approved names to District Directors and Institutional Probation Managers for review. Regional Directors then scheduled interviews in each region, with the interview panels consisting of the Regional Director, a District Director, an Institutional Probation Manager, an Office of the Victim Advocate representative, and a member of the CIRT planning committee which the board had formed to guide the design and development of the program (see chapter 3). Board members did not participate. The group asked a set of written questions of each applicant (see the box “Questions Screeners Ask Applicants”). Each interview lasted about a half hour. The Regional Director forwarded the winnowed-down list of acceptable candidates to the CIRT planning committee for final review.

Screeners in Pennsylvania follow a written set of questions for interviewing prospective CIRT Team members. Sample questions follow.

1. Why are you interested in being a Critical Incident Response Team member?
2. What is the value of a Critical Incident Response Team to the Board?
3. Have you ever been involved in a critical incident?
4. What experience do you have that makes you feel qualified for a position on the team?
5. What training have you had that would assist you in being a valued member of this team?
6. What other board activities are you involved in?
7. Explain why you feel confidentiality is important when you respond to a critical incident.

8. This position requires a person to be flexible and change priorities at a moment's notice. How would you respond to this type of pressure in the following scenarios:
 - (a) You are needed to respond to a critical incident and you are in the middle of detaining a parolee/preparing an urgent report. What would you do?
 - (b) At the scene, you are initially asked to debrief a group. You are then suddenly called upon to respond to an individual debriefing. What would you do?
9. How do you handle stress in your life?
10. Identify some areas in your life that continue to generate stress for you.
11. Critical incidents occur at all hours. Are you willing to be called to respond after hours, on weekends, and/or Holidays?
12. How will you know when it is time to resign from the Critical Incident Response Team?

Some stress programs in the law enforcement and corrections field accept applicants for peer supporters solely on the basis of their desire to help troubled colleagues. However, occasionally some would-be peer supporters, in addition to not being competent (for example, they constantly feel compelled to give advice), may have inappropriate motives for volunteering, such as getting a break from their regular work, expecting overtime pay, or wanting to “score points” with administrators.

- The Fresno County (California) Probation Agency recruited peer supporters through a process by which all staff participated in nominating candidates. However, some officers and support staff were nominated—and sent for two days of peer support training—who later turned out to be willing to serve only if they received overtime pay when they provided support after hours or on lunch breaks.
- The Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole interview panels rejected some applicants because the interviewers felt that a few did not have the right motives or interpersonal skills but primarily because they had not been parole agents long enough. According to a board member, “Applicants have to bring skills, knowledge, or experience to the position, not volunteer just because they want to do good.” The board also decided to exclude human resources staff who applied not only because they cannot go into the field but also because their participation would constitute a conflict of interest if a victim filed a workman’s compensation claim.

“Applicants have to bring skills, knowledge, or experience to the position, not volunteer just because they want to do good.” -- board member, Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole

Training

Professional staff—whether clinicians or trainers—normally do not need training because stress program administrators use in-house trainers or hire trainers with the expectation that they already have the skills and background needed to do the job. However, as noted above, some professional staff have the requisite clinical or training skills but need background in the nature of probation and parole work and stress. Or, if they are trainers, they may be asked to implement a curriculum they have not previously used. For both these reasons, Robert Glazier spent five hours with the three independent trainers in Harris County, Texas, going page by page over the training curriculum that had been prepared for the probation department’s Stomp Out Stress program. He also reviewed what it is like to be a probation officer and to participate in the probation culture.

By contrast, ***peer supporters require extensive training in how to help their colleagues.*** Furthermore, who trains peer supporters is extremely important because there are not many individuals who have the proper experience as trainers. In Pennsylvania, the board arranged for the National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA), in Washington, D.C., to provide CIRT Team members with its 40-hour community crisis intervention training that concludes with almost two days during which participants role play crisis intervention sessions both as facilitators and “victims” (see the box).

...[P]eer supporters require extensive training in how to help their colleagues.

The Counseling Team in San Bernardino, California, offers a three-day peer supporter training course that has been certified by the State’s Peace Officers Standards and Training (POST) Commission. As a result, agencies that send their staff for the training are reimbursed for The Counseling Team’s fee as long as the officers and support staff

complete the training. The Counseling Team follows its own over 160-page training manual, with modules devoted to:

- peer support issues—such as the types of services peer supporters can provide;
- listening skills—why they are so important and how to develop them;
- paraphrasing—restating the content of the colleague’s previous statement or feeling; guidelines for self-disclosure—when peer supporters may or should share their own feelings and opinions for the benefit of the peer being helped;
- critical incident stress—what victims go through and how peer supporters can respond;
- grief/bereavement—helping colleagues deal with loss and recognizing its signs;
- substance abuse—recognizing the signs and dealing with the substance abuser;
- assessment—figuring out what the colleague’s problem may be and selecting a short-term intervention;
- referrals—knowing when a referral is needed and how to suggest one tactfully; and
- suicide—recognizing the risk and responding to it.

The Board of Probation and Parole hired the National Organization of Victim Assistance (NOVA), a long-standing victim advocacy and service organization in Washington, D.C., to provide CIRT team members 40-hour training for community crisis response. The board held the training in a hotel in Harrisburg, where team members stayed for a week.

The first three days of training were largely didactic, focusing on:

- physical and emotional responses to crisis,
- the purpose and value of crisis intervention,
- long-term stress reactions,
- spiritual dimensions in crisis,
- coordinating a crisis response team, and
- working with the media.

On the fourth day, the trainer broke the participants into two groups to simulate a CIRT Team intervention after a critical incident. The first group played the two parts of the intervention team—facilitator and scribe. The second group role played staff participating in the intervention. The facilitator and scribe were given a brief synopsis of a hypothetical incident before “meeting” with the “staff.” The trainers repeated the simulation until every participant had a chance to play the part of facilitator and scribe.

Appendix E provides the NOVA training agenda; chapter 6 provides information for contacting NOVA for additional information about the training.

Once the program is up and running, ***agencies need to provide periodic additional training for peer supporters***. Ongoing training is needed to:

- reinforce peers' current skills,
- add to their skills,
- address new problems they may have encountered in providing support to their colleagues, and
- make sure they feel they are doing something positive and are growing.

Every three months The Counseling Team asks the peer support coordinators within each probation agency (and, simultaneously, each law enforcement and corrections department with which the organization has a contract) to send a notice offering a free 3-hour follow-up training session to all peer supporters, with one of the agencies taking responsibility for sponsoring the event and bringing refreshments. By inviting peer supporters from several criminal justice agencies, The Counseling Team can assemble enough peers to make the training cost-effective.

In Pennsylvania, the Victim Advocate and Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT) Coordinator designed an all-day mandatory meeting for all members of the Board of Probation and Parole CIRT Team. Held in October 2002, the training consisted primarily of a review of the group crisis intervention techniques that the National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA) taught the members during their initial week-long training, along with an opportunity to practice them through role play. There was a short exam on the intervention techniques at the end of the training session. The training also reviewed the role of CIRT team members and the guidelines they are to follow while on site.

Finally, the training included a review of two of previous CIRT team responses to determine what members could learn from them to apply during future responses.

Some probation agencies train supervisors to recognize signs of stress among officers and to refer the officers to sources of help in a diplomatic but effective manner. This training is important because:

- supervisors are in an excellent position to spot changes in officer behavior that may suggest problems, and
- in their position of authority, supervisors' recommendations that officers and support staff seek help may carry more weight than when other line staff, including peer supporters, make the suggestion.

A supervisor in the Boulder, Colorado, Probation Department on her own initiative took steps to reduce the stress level of staff in the team she supervises. The supervisor has taken on a portion of her team members' caseloads each month to allow each officer to complete his or her paperwork backlog, thereby reducing the officer's stress of always having to play catch-up. The supervisor tried the strategy after she noticed that her team members, who carry a very high caseload, were struggling to keep up with their work after a series of illnesses left the team short-handed for a time. The supervisor proposed the plan to the department's supervisors, received approval, and implemented the change.

Monitoring

Whether an agency uses in-house or external trainers to provide stress management sessions for employees, *the program administrator needs to ensure that someone monitors the training to make sure it is being handled properly*. For example, Robert Glazier, who coauthored the Stomp Out Stress training curriculum for the Harris County Department of Probation, sat in on many of the training sessions just to ensure that the trainers were adhering to the curriculum—even though he was the person who had recommended that the department hire them and had personally trained them. Of course, it is a standard training practice to distribute forms to participants after each training session asking how closely the material is meeting their needs and whether the trainers' techniques are suitable.

Staff counselors in the Washington State Department of Corrections Staff Resource Centers have latitude in deciding what kinds of services they provide throughout the

region, but all training materials and curriculums are standardized and approved by both the program director, and by the DOC's Performance Systems Department, which reviews all DOC educational training materials to ensure consistency. The program director also reviews one-time training offerings and small workshop agendas her staff wish to offer.

Stress programs in a number of criminal justice agencies have found ways to monitor peer support activity without compromising the confidentiality of the process. The Counseling Team asks peer supporters to complete contact sheet logs without recording the names of the officers and support staff with whom they have talked. The checklist asks for whether the person was an officer or civilian, male or female, and a family member or coworker. Peer supporters also record the stress-related issue for which support was given, ranging from problems with coworkers to financial concerns to alcohol abuse. The forms are useful for determining whether certain peers are overworked and whether temporary departmentwide problems need to be addressed—for example, a rash of officer divorces in one department prompted the Counseling Team to offer the peers a seminar on marriage and family support.

Stress programs occasionally need access to inpatient services. Programs are well advised to try to identify in advance a residential service that they have determined is qualified and covered by the employees' insurance.

A more common need is to have a pool of accessible and highly qualified professional mental health practitioners available for one-on-one counseling. Because of lack of time or expertise, no stress program can provide all the counseling services that officers, support staff, and their family members may need. Peer programs in particular need access to psychologists to whom they can refer employees who need professional help.

Some programs, such as the Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole's Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT), refer officers exclusively to their department's employee assistance program (EAP) for individual counseling, often because there is no funding for independent psychologists. Colorado's EAP (CSEAP) provides employees in the Boulder Probation Department up to six free visits with a clinician, substance abuse

counselor, financial advisor, or legal advisor free of charge. Officers report good results using the program:

“CSEAP was very helpful to me when I was going through some personal problems. My supervisor knew what I was going through and suggested I try them. I felt very comfortable using the services and having my supervisor know about it. I told others about it. The environment here is conducive to sharing experiences about CSEAP.”

Unfortunately, most employees in many other agencies will not use their employee assistance program for stress-related problems because they fear the EAP will not keep their visits confidential, are not convinced the EAP has qualified staff available who have the knowledge of criminal justice work to provide effective assistance, or are unwilling to go through an initial screening process with the EAP only to be referred to an independent clinician for counseling. For this reason, occupational nurse consultants in the Washington State’s Department of Corrections Staff Resource Centers keep an updated list of private counselors and other providers that DOC employees and staff counselors can reference at any time.

Precisely because most EAPs refer employees to outside clinicians, there is usually a wait—sometimes of several days—before treatment can begin.

- Because of this delay, when victims needed immediate professional counseling after two interventions that the CIRT team conducted in Pennsylvania, the director of human resources for the Board of Probation and Parole personally telephoned the supervisor in the Governor’s office who oversees the State’s employee assistance program contractor to explain the crisis nature of the situation and ask him to contact the EAP immediately to arrange for an expedited—same-day—referral, which the supervisor did arrange.
- An advantage for employees in the probation agencies in Southern California that the agencies’ contracts with The Counseling Team for psychological services provide for making a counselor available any time of the day or night if an officer is in crisis.

Chapter 5: Marketing the Program

Stress programs will not be effective unless they can be “sold” successfully to all levels of staff. However, agency administrators must concretely demonstrate that ***they are concerned about their employees’ welfare*** and that the program will actually benefit employees.

- A member of Pennsylvania’s Board of Probation and Parole takes the time to run the two-hour session that the board provides to all new employees orienting them to the agency’s Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT).
- The board’s Director of Probation and Parole Services made time to participate in the four-hour orientations to CIRT that the agency spent a year providing to all employees across the State.

Programs also need to secure buy-in from ***middle managers*** and ***line supervisors*** who are typically in a position to decide whether to give peer supporters time off to help other officers and who are in an excellent position to spot when an employee could benefit from participating in the program—and refer the person for help. It can also be essential to obtain ***union support*** in the early stages—better yet, during the planning stages—of the program.

Departments that plan new stress programs need to:

- make outreach an ***ongoing*** program activity, not a one-time effort,
- use ***several strategies*** for making employees aware of the program, including involving them in planning the program, and
- be ***patient***.

Getting family members to participate in a stress program can be difficult. Some programs have succeeded in involving them by taking advantage of opportunities for contacting them that critical incidents, new employee training, and individual counseling offer.

In addition to the need for recruiting top-notch staff, agencies will not have a successful program unless they market the program successfully to all levels of staff. However, while it is essential to “sell” the program to employees for it to succeed, ultimately, as one officer said, “The proof is in the pudding.” According to one program manager, “During the [staff] orientation [to the program], staff think the program is CYA. It takes

an incident to show that it is genuine—that the agency cares.” In short, agency administrators must demonstrate, not just proclaim, that:

- (a) they implemented the program at least in part *out of concern for the employees’ welfare* and
- (b) that the program *actually does help employees*.

After a serious critical incident in one agency, many staff were skeptical when the program offered assistance. But after the program had provided help, most officers changed their minds:

- *The program demonstrated to every employee [that] there’s a level of genuine concern among the [top administration] . . . and it will step up to the plate and deal with critical incident issues. A lot of people were impressed they came and followed through—it wasn’t just PR or CYA.*
- *[Initially,] I thought of it as another bureaucrat going through the motions. We so often have groups and trainings that involve going through the motions, and you don’t feel it’s helping you or that they’re there to help you. I felt in this case that they [top administrators] were concerned and wanted to help us get through this [critical incident].*

While it remains a truism that “seeing is believing,” agencies still need to do their best to market the program from the outset—and forever. According to the Pennsylvania’s Office of the Victim Advocate Critical Incident Response Team Coordinator, “I always feel I’m proving myself. There are a lot of trust issues by the field staff with the board—you have to prove in the field what you can do”

Demonstrating Top Administration Support

Without support from the highest level of agency administrators, a stress program will not succeed. Furthermore, their support must be *proactive*, not given only after a crisis occurs, and *visible*, not offered just behind the scenes.

Without support from the highest level of agency administrators, a stress program will not succeed.

The Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole has gone to great lengths to show that top administrators support its Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT). The then-chairman of the nine-person board, another board member, the Governor-appointed Victim Advocate, and the Director of Probation and Parole Services each knew the damage stress could inflict on individuals and agencies, and each was motivated by a sincere desire to help employees cope with stress after a critical incident. For example, the board member, as a former police officer, had experienced first-hand the stress that victimization could create for law enforcement officers; then, as chief of a county probation department, he had witnessed how the increasingly violent nature of probationers could cause stress for probation officers. As a result, on his own initiative he had developed a critical incident response program for his county.

Among the many ways top administrators in Pennsylvania have promoted CIRT among employees, two stand out:

- During the four-hour orientation to CIRT that several team members provided at offices across the state, the board's Director of Probation and Parole services gave a short presentation that demonstrated the top administrators' support for the program and employees' emotional well being. He described his experience during and after an incident in which a county probation officer had committed suicide and there was no formal or even informal procedure for handling the emotional aftermath among her coworkers.
- A board member gives a two-hour presentation during each *new* employee week-long training program. He discusses line-of-duty victimization, characteristics of assailants and the context of incidents, and the board's policies for providing support after a critical incident.

Employees at these sessions reported they were very impressed that two busy top administrators made the time to talk with them and said the administrators' presence lent credibility to the program.

In some instances, administrators attend stress trainings or debriefings for officers to show their support for the program—and sometimes because they need assistance themselves with handling stress. However, administrator participation in actual program activities is controversial (see the box).

There is disagreement about whether top administrators—or even mid-level managers and line supervisors—should participate in or be present at program trainings or debriefings. A top agency administrator participated in a debriefing after a serious critical incident in one jurisdiction. A participant in the debriefing appreciated that the administrator attended because it demonstrated that the agency considered the welfare of the staff to be important enough for the administrator to take the time to attend. However, this same participant cautioned, “But generally I would not want management . . . present because some officers won’t be comfortable—will be paranoid—with bosses there. People are more comfortable with their peers—they’re in the same boat with high caseloads, and so on, so peers understand each other.”

According to the Director of Probation and Parole Services in Pennsylvania, “Having administrators present can result in participants not saying they are upset because they will be afraid they will be told to get help and management will use their seeking help against them.”

The Victim Advocate of the Pennsylvania Office of the Victim Advocate, adds that “Whether supervisors and central office administrators participate in the interventions depends on the situation: supervisors and administrators might show up on scene to show support for officers but not necessarily participate in the interventions. In the Philadelphia shooting, central office administrators showed up to show support but did not attend the interventions because staff might have been hostile to them. In the Reading suicide, two local supervisors showed up to show support but they also attended the interventions as participants because they had been victims, too.”

Buy-In from Middle Management and Line Supervisors

Middle management and immediate supervisors are typically in a position to decide whether to give peer supporters time off during working hours to help other officers—and whether to allow troubled officers time to meet with peer supporters. As a result, some supervisors may resist starting a program or oppose and even sabotage it after it becomes operational because they do not want their staff taken out of duty to provide help to colleagues.

To address this understandable concern, the Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole was careful to require office directors to approve their staff members’ applications to

become CIRT Team members. In addition, as the Pennsylvania board was careful to do, agencies need to develop a policy about who will cover for peer supporters while they are assisting colleagues.

Program staff also need to *explain to managers and supervisors how the program can benefit, rather than hamper, them*:

- When the program takes care of staff who are experiencing stress after a critical incident or a build-up of chronic stress, that is one less thing managers have to worry about dealing with.
- Anything that reduces stress among line officers and support staff will probably reduce stress for supervisors—working with stressed-out staff is inherently stressful for everyone who comes in contact with them.
- If mid-level supervisors are included in the program, they can work together with their staff to improve mutual communication. Two supervisors who participated in the Cuyahoga County (Ohio) Juvenile Court Comprehensive Wellness Program training sessions said that communication and problem solving had improved between them and those of their staff who completed the program.
- To the extent that a program reduces staff use of “mental health” days, or reduces the number of days staff call in sick with genuine physical problems caused by stress on the job, supervisors will have less of a headache arranging for other staff to cover for them.

| |
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| <p><i>Program staff . . . need to explain to managers and supervisors how the program can benefit, rather than hamper, them.</i></p> |
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Collaborating with the Union

As the bargaining unit and officers’ primary representative with management, the officers’ union may be in a unique position to stymie or promote a stress program. Union leaders can demand that officers be paid overtime or given compensatory time whenever they provide peer support. They can also tell their members that the peer supporters or counselors and trainers do not keep visits or conversations confidential and are a “management tool.” As a result, *it may be very important to obtain union support in the early stages—better yet, during the planning stages—of the program.*

... [I]t may be very important to obtain union support in the early stages—better yet, during the planning stages—of the program.

When Michael Ferriter, the Montana Department of Corrections' Community Corrections Division Administrator, proposed a mandatory annual fitness test for most of the department's probation, parole, and correctional officers, he anticipated that many officers would object to the new policy. As a result, Ferriter, a member of the DOC's Management Committee, asked the union to support the test requirement in exchange for a \$150 annual stipend for each officer to spend on some form of physical fitness, from helping to pay for a health club membership to purchasing bar bells.

In Pennsylvania, American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) union locals that represents probation and parole officers did not have significant involvement with the development of the CIRT program. However, the Critical Incident Response Team was discussed at one union local meeting. A union member opposed the board's making the CIRT all-staff orientation sessions mandatory, but a union officer responded that required attendance was not unreasonable because it was an informational session only and staff would participate on company time as part of the agents' required 40 hours of annual continuing education. The program was also raised at one local's executive meeting. One area of concern among members was a form that the board would like all staff to fill out listing their closest relatives and how the CIRT team could reach them in an emergency to save time and stress having to track them down. The board plans to work with the union to ensure that the form is kept confidential.

Correctional officer unions have been increasingly asking for employee stress programs as part of their labor-management contracts with correctional administrators. Probation and parole officer bargaining units can do the same with their management representatives. In addition to securing an important employee benefit by including a stress program in the contract, unions benefit if administrators are willing to put some

suspensions or terminations on hold while they offer an officer or support staff a chance to go to the program and mend his or her ways.

Outreach to Officers and Support Staff

Departments that plan new stress programs need to keep several points in mind when marketing their services to line staff:

- ***gain the support of management and labor*** (see above) before attempting to win over line officers;
- make outreach an ***ongoing program activity***, not a one-time effort;
- ***be patient***—it takes time for staff to come to trust the program and feel that it can do them some good;
- use ***several strategies*** for making employees aware of the program.

Programs should also maximize the value of program staff time and contact with employees by conducting outreach while providing services. For example, clinicians in the Washington State Department of Corrections Staff Resource Centers take advantage of the periodic in-service trainings and information sessions they conduct on topics such as burnout, career advancement, and stress management to explain the program's services. Whenever the department's Crisis Intervention team, which includes the centers' staff, performs outreach after a critical incident, Resource Center nurses and counselors responding to the incident educate employees about the other services the centers offer.

Programs have used a wide range of other approaches to encourage officers to use their services, including:

- *letters with pay checks* presenting the program's services and explaining how to access them;
- developing and distributing *brochures*; and
- explaining the program to students *at the academy* or at *new employee orientation training*.

The Pennsylvania Approach to Marketing

Pennsylvania's Board of Probation and Parole learned the hard way that it needed to orient staff to its Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT). In 1999, an agent was shot at twice at close range by a probationer but was—very luckily—uninjured. When CIRT

team members came to his support, he told them he had never heard of the group. As a result, the board formed an orientation planning committee that included board Training Division staff and nine CIRT Team members who had volunteered to share in leading the orientations to develop a mandatory orientation program for all staff.

The orientation committee provided two very significant suggestions for how to orient staff to the CIRT program:

- The committee recommended having three agents briefly describe to staff at the beginning of the orientation how the agency ignored them after critical incidents in which they had been victims *before* the CIRT Team had been formed. Then, the committee suggested, have a fourth staff member who was victimized *after* the program became operational describe the dramatically different agency response to his experience. Because all four agents could not always attend every orientation, the board made a videotape of the agents describing their incidents so orientation leaders could have an attractive substitute for the agents' in-person presentations (see "Sources of Help" in chapter 6, Other Keys to Program Success).
- The previous year, the board had provided a two-and-one-half day training for all staff on domestic violence which some agents felt took them away from their work for too long a period of time. As a result, the committee recommended—and the board agreed—that the CIRT orientation be limited to four hours, not the full day as originally planned.

CIRT program administrators developed a packet of materials for the orientation, including a PowerPoint demonstration that explains:

- who is on the team,
- under what circumstances the team is activated and how it is activated,
- what the team does (and does not do),
- the Critical Incident Response Protocol (passed out to every staff member), and
- the nature of victimization and responses to trauma.

The Office of the Victim Advocate's CIRT Team Coordinator then trained nine CIRT staff who volunteered to lead the orientations in pairs across the State. The half-day mandatory orientations ran monthly from January to December 2002. Deputy directors, parole supervisors, and office managers, as well as support staff, were all required to attend. A skeletal staff operated the offices during the training. The training also provided an opportunity for staff to see the coordinator's face and understand her role as

the CIRT Team Coordinator. Because CIRT Team members who do the orientation include clerical staff, board employees saw that the program does not serve just agents.

The Office of the Victim Advocate's CIRT Team Coordinator then trained nine CIRT staff . . . to lead orientations [to the peer support program] in pairs across the State [of Pennsylvania] . . .

As noted above, the board also provides a two-hour block for the Director of Probation and Parole Services to explain CIRT to *new* employees before they even get on the job. Evaluations of the new employee orientation suggest that the presentation creates many converts to the program (see the box).

After each quarterly new employee orientation program, the Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole's Training Division passes out an evaluation sheet to participants soliciting comments on the training. The following are some of the comments participants have made about the presentation on potential critical incidents on the job and the structure and response of the Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT).

- "Good to know that such a program exists for the employees."
- "Reassuring that PBPP [Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole] supports employees instead of emphasizing their mistakes."
- "Good to know we're appreciated and will be cared for when something bad happens."
- "Created feeling that we actually matter as employees and that we will be supported."
- "Nice to know the board supports you in terrible situations."

Some participants report that the presentation on CIRT is one of the most valuable parts of the training:

- "This was by far the best presentation yet. I couldn't stop listening to him [the presenter] if I tried."
- "... best two hours of NEOP [new employee orientation program]."
- "I think this is probably the most important info[rmation] provided during the entire orientation."

The Harris County, Texas, Approach to Marketing

The Harris County (Texas) Community Supervision and Corrections Department agency marketed its Stomp Out Stress training program in a variety of ways.

- Staff ***placed signs*** promoting the program in all eight regional community supervision offices in Harris County.
- The registration form that Bennett Chapman, program manager at the time in the department's Staff Development Branch and director of its Training Unit, e-mailed to officers gave them the opportunity to designate the dates and times ***that were most convenient for them*** to attend each of the four training sessions (each session was offered on three different dates).
- Chapman provided motivational attachments to the monthly training calendar she e-mailed to all staff that included:
 - ***a self-executing mini-stress assessment*** that officers could fill out to determine how the program might benefit them (see appendix A), and
 - a place on the registration form that included space where officers could indicate ***whether they had a significant other*** who might want to participate).
- At a departmentwide senior managers' meeting, Chapman ***urged managers to encourage their officers to attend the program*** and to assist officers interested in attending in covering their caseloads during the training days.
- Trainers from the Training Branch personally visited each of the county's eight regional offices to distribute the training schedule options and pass out fliers describing the training. The trainers promoted the program and recruited participants by ***talking with them individually*** and in informal, ad hoc groups. The trainers:
 - explained that the program would give them practical strategies for coping with stress—tips they could actually use in their everyday lives;
 - pointed out that the program would help their significant others to understand the work-related stress the officers experience;
 - offered compensatory time when attending outside of regular office hours; and
 - informed them that the training would count as credit toward the officers' annual 40-hour continuing education requirement.
- The classes were posted on the department's monthly training calendar, and an article on the program appeared in the department's quarterly newsletter.

- Officers who participated in the focus group that assisted with developing the marketing strategy (see below) were asked to promote the program in their regions and encourage their coworkers to participate.

Involve Officers and Support Staff in Planning the Program

Agencies that involve line staff in planning the program gain two benefits. First, it is more likely that a program will be designed that will be acceptable to the rank and file. Second, line staff who participate can “sell” the program to their colleagues. The Cuyahoga County (Ohio), Harris County (Texas), and Pennsylvania programs all involved line staff in their planning process.

- Cuyahoga County Juvenile Court implemented a number of strategies for involving employees in the planning of its stress program.
 - Even before submitting a grant application to the National Institute of Justice, the program director of the court’s Comprehensive Wellness Program conducted one-on-one interviews with randomly selected staff members to get a sense of what their program needs might be.
 - The outside contractor the agency hired to run the program conducted three focus groups before designing the training sessions—one with probation officers, one with detention officers, and one with managers from both departments.
 - Once awarded the grant, the court’s senior program planner who took over supervision of the program established a steering committee consisting of probation and detention staff who had some experience designing training curriculums or conducting training (e.g., some had participated in State train-the-trainer programs). The steering committee, which met monthly, reviewed the training curriculum and offered suggestions for improving it. The committee also gave suggestions for how to conduct the training—for example, whether to begin each day early and end early or start late and end late; whether to mix probation and detention staff together in the same sessions or separate them into homogenous groups; and which volunteers should be assigned to which training groups to avoid personality clashes. Finally, the committee—all of whom participated in the training themselves—addressed problems that arose during the training, developing protocols to handle each one. For example, when a participant vigorously engaged in a prolonged disagreement with a trainer on whether employees should “adjust” their personalities to suit the needs of their coworkers and clients, committee members decided that, when future altercations arose during the training, they would pull the aggressive participant aside and tell the person to address the issue with the trainer at lunch, not during the training session. The committee developed another

protocol on how to handle participants who came to the sessions late, deciding to require all participants to fill in time sheets to be forwarded to their department heads, who could address the problem.

Cuyahoga County Juvenile Court . . . established a steering committee . . . of probation and detention staff, which met monthly, [and] reviewed the training curriculum and offered suggestions for improving it . . . , gave suggestions for how to conduct the training . . . , [and] addressed problems that arose during the training.

- The Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole, along with the Office of the Victim Advocate, recruited staff for a committee that the chairman assigned to design the Critical Incident Response Team policies and procedures. In addition to agency administrators, the committee incorporated representatives of agents and secretaries in the field, including several staff who had been involved personally in critical incidents. The board also included line staff on its committee assigned to develop an all-staff orientation program to CIRT (see above).
- After asking department managers to suggest staff to serve on an advisory committee, the director of the Harris County, Texas, Stomp Out Stress program convened a group of 31 recommended officers—representing the training’s intended audience—to address a number of potentially problematic recruitment and other programmatic issues from their perspective as experienced officers and supervisors (see the box). The program manager then asked members to “talk up” the program in their respective regional offices.

Program Logistics

- how often to offer the classes
- what times of day and days of the week to hold the classes
- whether to permit make-up classes
- how many participants to allow in each class
- how long each module should last

Obstacles to Participation

- time away from regularly scheduled work
- attending after hours

- colleagues' perceptions of why officers volunteered to participate
- officers' perceptions that the training would not help reduce stress
- mistrust of participating in a research project
- concern the program would not be confidential

Motivating Staff to Participate

- use of incentives
- what is "in it" for them
- how their participation will benefit the department
- recognition for participating
- break from normal job responsibilities

Motivating Significant Others to Participate

- what would make family members want to participate
- what else is "in it" for significant others to attend
- what incentives they can be given to participate
- how the class schedule can accommodate families' personal schedules

Identify and Address Objections to the Program

Programs need to learn what objections their particular employees may have to participating in the stress program and then take steps to defuse these concerns. Rather than learn about these obstacles through the grapevine, program staff can periodically survey staff anonymously about their perceptions of the program. Some of the reasons for employee resistance that programs have identified follow.

- When the stress program involves staff training, some officers are concerned about falling behind on their casework by attending—especially, given their already high caseloads. One officer reported, "It was worth the time, but, because it was held during working hours, my own work was piling up."
- Bennett Chapman in Harris County suggests that trying to motivate officers to participate who are burned out may not meet with success because they may be too apathetic to participate in the program.
- Officers may be concerned that speaking out against management might bring retaliation. The importance of assuring that what participants say during stress program trainings and debriefings remains confidential (within the limits of the law) is discussed in chapter 6, Other Keys to Program Success.

Family Issues

As noted in chapter 2, The Extent and Sources of Probation and Parole Officer Stress, working as a probation or parole officer can take a toll on the officer's family—even when the officer does not experience significant work-related stress. In turn, a family member may increase the officer's stress, for example, by repeatedly expressing fear about the officer's safety on the job.

Conversely, family members can help *reduce* the officer's stress if they are understanding and flexible. Furthermore, because family members are often the first to recognize when an officer needs help, they can play a crucial role in encouraging the officer to seek assistance before the problem becomes severe. Family members are more likely to recognize stress and refer the officer to help if the agency has properly explained to them the signs of stress-related problems and the availability of services that can address these difficulties.

Obstacles to Family Participation

Getting family members to participate in a stress program can be very difficult. The Harris County, Texas, Stomp Out Stress Program intended to involve family members in its training sessions to help them learn more about the nature of their partners' work and its stresses so they could be supportive and empathetic—for example, understand exactly why their partner comes home from work saying he or she had “a bad day.” For training family members, the program developed a 15-minute homemade video of actual officers simulating what they do at work, with some officers taking the parts of offenders. The video (see appendix B) illustrates some of the stresses of the job:

- An officer hears a page, calls in, and finds out it is a judge who wants to see an offender's file right way.
- A supervisor (feet on her desk reading a newspaper) tells an officer who comes to see her about another matter, “By the way, I noticed you haven't done all your computer entries.”
- The receptionist tells an officer, “You've got another ‘crazy’ out here to see before the guy who wants the travel permit. There's also a call holding (the mother of a probationer who is suicidal).”

However, although 23 spouses and partners initially expressed interest in participating, the program was able to recruit only 5 family members, only 2 of whom completed all four training sessions (see chapter 3, Program Case Studies). This disappointing result occurred even though program staff tried to schedule the training sessions at various times of the day and on weekends to make attendance more feasible. In addition, Tropical Storm Alison hit Texas during the first week of training and had a devastating effect on many of the participants, including making travel to the training from some locations impossible for many days.

During recruitment, some officers in Harris County objected to inviting their significant others to participate for three principal reasons:

1. the (mostly older) officers wanted to keep their jobs separate from their home lives;
2. the officers were concerned their partners would hear gossip and bad things about probation officers during the sessions; or
3. the officers did not trust that what their family members might say during the training (for example, negative comments about the agency) would remain confidential, instead ending up in the hands of management and used against them.

The Cuyahoga County, Ohio, Comprehensive Wellness Program also tried unsuccessfully to recruit family members and significant others. One barrier to participation may have been that the training was conducted during the day.

Motivating Family Members to Participate

While many programs have difficulty getting partners to participate, some programs have succeeded by taking advantage of three opportunities to be of service: critical incidents, new employee training, and officers who are already in individual counseling.

Critical Incidents

Critical incidents provide a unique opportunity to work with family members because spouses are typically desperately interested in finding out what happened after the

incident and often in need of emotional support. As a result, it is often not necessary to try to motivate them to participate—they usually *want* to be attended to. Reflecting this opportunity (but primarily because it is the right thing to do), some stress programs make a point of going out of their way to make contact with family members, whether at the scene or by phone at home, to offer assistance ranging from counseling, to sharing accurate information about the incident, to babysitting.

Critical incidents provide a unique opportunity to work with family members because spouses are typically desperately interested in finding out what happened after the incident and often in need of emotional support.

Pennsylvania's Board of Probation and Parole CIRT Team has involved family members extensively after critical incidents whenever team members have seen the need and family members have accepted the assistance (see chapter 3).

- After a supervisor's suicide, team members spent several hours with his wife and children, providing support and running errands.
- After an offender shot almost point-blank at an officer, missing him twice, team members (with permission) drove the officer's wife home from work and sat with her until he had completed his paperwork at the police department and had gone home. The officer reported that his wife was very grateful for the team's help.

When a local union president in New York State who had been involved in supporting his correctional agency's stress program telephoned officers at home who had been involved in a critical incident at the Mohawk Correctional Facility, he not only inquired about how *they* were doing but also asked *if their partners* were having difficulty coping with the crisis and for permission to talk with them. He ended up referring three wives to the program's critical incident stress counselor.

While some agencies and program staff may feel it would be an intrusion to offer to help family members, one law enforcement stress expert suggested that, when in doubt, *ask*: "An offer of support to the spouse and family from the officer's department is rarely

inappropriate and may be deeply appreciated, even if declined by the family. What seems to hurt spouses very deeply is the impression that their needs are being ignored”¹

Sometimes the most helpful—and appreciated—thing stress program staff can do for family members during and after a critical incident is simply to run errands for them. After one critical incident, the Counseling Team arranged for peer supporters to bring food to the hospital and the officer’s home, and to look after the officer’s children. After the suicide of a Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole employee, according to a District Director, “One immediate concern was cleaning up the blood in the bedroom so the family would not go back to a room splattered with blood. So the Victim Advocate said she would go over and clean it” Once involved in the program during or after a critical incident, partners may decide to participate in other program activities—as well as “talk up” the program among other spouses.

New Employee Training

Another “window of opportunity” for involving family members is while newly hired probation and parole officers are still in training. Most applicants for probation and parole officer positions must complete a training program sponsored by their State government or the Federal Government. This is a time when many spouses of police recruits—and, presumably, of probation and parole officer trainees—are intensely interested in knowing how their lives may change as a result of their partner’s new job, perhaps because of the job’s different hours, concerns about whether the work will be dangerous, and the new or different work-related stress their partners may bring home.

As a result, a number of police agencies provide orientation and training about the stress involved in law enforcement work to the partners of recruits who are still attending the academy.² While no probation or parole agencies were identified that do this, there is no reason why probation and parole agency stress programs cannot also introduce orientations and training for partners during new employee training. The box “Topics That Training for Officers’ Spouses Should Address” suggests the principal topics the

training for spouses should focus on—regardless of whether the training is held during new employee training or after the new employees have been on the job.

When programs offer training to family members—whether during new employee training or for the spouses of officers who are already employed—trainers should cover at least the following five topics:

- ***Describe what probation and parole officers do.*** Many partners of police officers find that the most useful benefit of training is simply learning what law enforcement work involves. Probation and parole officer partners are likely to have the same reaction.³
 - *Prepare a visual presentation* (e.g., using PowerPoint) that graphically shows typical officer activities, especially field visits. As noted above, the Harris County, Texas, program developed a 15-minute homemade video of actual officers simulating what they do at work. The video clearly portrays some of the stresses of the job (see appendix B).
 - *Take partners on a tour of the offices* where their spouses work or will be working, pointing out in particular the work area’s security features. With the permission of offenders, allow spouses to sit in on an office visit.
 - Just as civilians in many communities can participate in “ride alongs” with police officers and sheriff’s deputies, it may be possible—with appropriate legal waivers—to *allow spouses to accompany probation and parole officers on field visits*.
- Review ***the sources and manifestations of stress*** among probation and parole officers and suggest how spouses can recognize the effects of stress in officers.
- Ask partners to ***discuss how the officers’ work-related stress may affect their home lives***. Add information to what they may omit.
- Explain how the partners’ responses to the officers’ stress ***can increase or decrease that stress***. Ask for and provide examples of constructive ways spouses can respond to the stress that officers may bring home. Discuss and role play ***coping strategies*** they can suggest to their partners and how they can offer help to the officer, including encouraging the officer to seek help in a manner that the officer is likely to accept.
- Describe ***the services provided by the stress program*** for officers and their spouses, and other sources of assistance.

Offering training to spouses during new employee training (as well as to the spouses of officers who are already on the job) is most likely to succeed if program staff follow three other guidelines:

- Offer to conduct trainings at multiple times (e.g., evenings as well as Saturdays) so that partners can choose the hours that are most convenient for them.
- Provide the training at a location that is convenient to many partners.
- Use (and advertise) veteran officers and their partners as co-trainers. Since they can speak from personal experience, they are more likely than professional trainers to be seen as credible and therefore to secure family members' participation and attention.

Once family members have participated in a training, whether during their partners' training period or after their partners are already on the job, if the experience has been positive, word of mouth will motivate other spouses to express interest. After the Collier County (Florida) Sheriff's hosted a successful "spouse academy" for the wives of correctional officers, the corrections lieutenant who taught the academy reported that "We had about a dozen officers asking when the next one would be because they wanted their spouses to attend." The lieutenant added that "About a dozen spouses called me, too."⁴ Although the experience involved the spouses of correctional officers, the same word-of-mouth benefit is likely to happen if probation and parole spouses participate in an "academy."

Individual Counseling

Programs that offer individual counseling whether in-house, as with Washington State's Staff Resource Centers, or through contracts with an outside provider (e.g., Southern California's The Counseling Team), can ensure that therapists encourage officers to bring their spouses to sessions or suggest that the officers recommend marital or individual counseling to their spouses. Staff counselors in Washington State's Staff Resource Centers see family members at their own discretion. If an offender requests that a family member be present for a session, the individual may be asked to come in. In addition, an

employee may turn to the staff counselor as a one-time, short-term crisis intervention resource for his or her family until a resource in the community can be identified.

San Bernardino's The Counseling Team encourages officers who come for counseling to ask their spouses to attend, especially if the officer's problem is a couples issue or is affecting his or her spouse. With the officer's permission, a counselor telephones the spouse directly in these cases and invites the person to come in for one session without the officer to give the spouse's perspective of the officer's problem. Only one spouse has ever refused to come in. Furthermore, a counselor reported, once the spouse has come for the initial session, "then the officer is more likely to come back with the spouse."

San Bernardino's The Counseling Team encourages officers who come for counseling to ask their spouses to attend, especially if the officer's problem is a couples issue or is affecting his or her spouse.

Making these suggestions to officers during individual counseling takes advantage of the fact that officers in counseling are likely to foresee the benefit of involving their spouses in counseling because, among police officers and, therefore, probably among probation and parole officers, the most common problem for which officers seek counseling is marital or other relationship difficulties—*not* their work (e.g., conflicts with supervisors, stress on the job).⁵ Furthermore, by virtue of *their* participating in counseling, the officers can see for themselves that the program is confidential and helpful.

Finally, the officers' suggestion to their spouses that they consider counseling is likely to fall on receptive ears: a survey of police officers' wives found that, when asked what type of services the department should be providing, one-third hoped for an orientation to law enforcement and about one-tenth wanted social activities, financial and medical assistance, and information services, but over half wanted family or marital counseling.⁶

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 2. Finn, Peter, and Julie Esselman Tomz, *Developing a Law Enforcement Stress Program for Officers and Their Families*. National Institute of Justice, U.S. Department of Justice (Washington, D.C.): 1997, p. 144.
 3. Finn and Tomz, *Developing a Law Enforcement Stress Program*, p. 143.
 4. Finn, Peter, *Addressing Correctional Officer Stress: Programs and Strategies*. National Institute of Justice, U.S. Department of Justice (Washington, D.C.): 2000, p. 65.
 5. See, for example, Finn and Tomz, *Developing a Law Enforcement Stress Program*, p. 139, and "On the Front Lines: Police Stress and Family Well-Being," Testimony by B.J. Anderson, Hearing Before the Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families, House of Representatives, 102nd Congress, 1st Session, May 20, 1991, Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office: 1991: 61-63.
 6. Arthur Neiderhoffer, and Elaine Niederhoffer, *The Police Family: From Station House to Ranch House*. Lexington Books, 1978: 130-131.

Chapter 6: Other Keys to Program Success

In addition to staffing and marketing, there are several other essential features of a successful stress program.

(1) ***Guarantee Confidentiality—Within the Limits of the Law.*** Confidentiality is an indispensable requirement of any stress program's effectiveness. With certain well-defined exceptions, mental health practitioners may not share what clients tell them without the client's permission. However, nonlicensed trainers and peer supporters generally do not have this privilege. Program administrators need to consult with a local attorney regarding the limits of confidentiality and inform staff about what information can and cannot be kept confidential.

(2) ***Reduce Organizational Sources of Stress.*** Because probation and parole agencies themselves create the most significant stress for officers, a stress program will be only partially successful if it does not work with management to reduce organizational sources of stress. Simple steps that program staff and management in any agency can work on together to reduce stress include:

- having supervisors *provide compliments to good workers* on a regular basis,
- encouraging staff to *exercise* during lunch breaks, and
- *involving line staff in some of the decisions* that are made about agency operations.

(3) ***Evaluate the Program.*** Evaluation is essential to know whether and how the program needs improvement and to have compelling evidence for convincing funding sources to continue the program. Some agencies have made outcome evaluation an essential focus of their planning process.

(4) ***Obtain Adequate Program Funding.*** Agency administrators can begin by determining what the program's funding needs will be—and then use a variety of strategies for minimizing program costs.

(5) ***Take Advantage of Available Technical Assistance.*** A number of free materials, publications, and experienced practitioners are available to help plan and evaluate the program.

In addition to staffing and marketing, there are several other keys to a successful stress program:

- (1) convincing employees that the program (within the limits of the law) *is confidential*—and making sure that it is;
- (2) working with top administrators to remove or reduce some *organizational sources of stress*;
- (3) *funding* the program adequately;
- (4) *monitoring and evaluating* how well the program is working; and
- (5) taking advantage of available free *technical assistance*.

Securing Trust: Guaranteeing Confidentiality

The perception and reality of confidentiality are an indispensable requirement of any stress program's effectiveness. If officers suspect program staff are reporting them—or repeating conversations—to supervisors without permission, the program's reputation will be quickly, and perhaps irremediably, killed within the entire agency. However, the rules of confidentiality are different for licensed clinicians, on the one hand, and nonlicensed trainers and peer supporters, on the other hand.

Clinicians

As a general rule, State law considers information that clients give to licensed mental health practitioners to be privileged communication that the counselor may not share with anyone else without the client's permission.¹ As Ellen Kirschman, a psychologist who treats law enforcement officers, notes, "Licensed mental health professionals are *required* by statute and their professional code of ethics and conduct . . . to keep all records confidential. If they do not, they risk losing the license they need to practice, and they open themselves up to lawsuits."

In-house clinicians and stress programs that use independent clinicians can help to ensure that client communications and records remain confidential by:

- securing informed consent from all clients at the beginning of the first counseling session and
- preparing and disseminating a written confidentiality policy.

Among the circumstances in which mental health professionals must by law break confidentiality are the following:

- If the client reveals that he or she is abusing a child or elderly person, the counselor must tell the appropriate protective service agency and the police.
- If the client is suicidal, or so disabled that he or she cannot care for him- or herself, the counselor must take steps to find support for the person.

Peer Supporters

Confidentiality is a more complicated issue for nonlicensed trainers and peer supporters. On the one hand, no program involving the use of trainers or peer supporters will survive if they talk to other individuals about the people they train or support—in other words, nonlicensed program staff should maintain voluntarily the same confidentiality that clinicians are required to maintain. On the other hand, unless specifically addressed by State statute, communication between trainers or peer supporters and probation and parole agency employees is never privileged conversation under the law, regardless of the agency's rules, unless the trainers and peers are licensed mental health professionals. As a result, supervisors and courts have the legal right demand to know what was said during these conversations. Furthermore, as with licensed counselors, peer supporters have a positive duty to report when employees being offered support appear to be a danger to themselves or others or say they have committed child or elder abuse, domestic violence, or a felony.

Agencies also cannot offer immunity from civil and criminal litigation to peer supporters who co-lead a debriefing and are later asked to testify at departmental hearings or in civil or criminal proceedings about what they heard. Participants in debriefings should be told this and warned against making comments that could be considered admissions of wrongdoing, such as “If only I had . . . “ or “I should have”

To make sure their services remain confidential, some clinicians may be tempted to keep no records. However, counselors must maintain appropriate client records to ensure good client care,* provide evidence of a clinician's use of appropriate treatment in case of a lawsuit (e.g., after a client commits suicide), and meet the requirements of some State statutes and licensing boards.

There may be times when a program feels strongly that keeping records would be inadvisable. This is what the Washington State Department of Corrections Staff Resource Centers decided. However, staff arranged for the State Department of Health (the program's licensing board) and the Attorney General to review and approve the no-records policy. Furthermore, the program counselors who are licensed as private practice clinicians cleared the policy with their licensing bodies, including the American Psychological Society. This exception to the normal professional standards for keeping clinical records highlights the need for programs to consult with a local attorney and appropriate licensing boards regarding appropriate record keeping procedures—and confidentiality—in their jurisdictions.

*Section 1.23 of the American Psychological Association's "Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct" (Washington, D.C.: n.d.) states, "Psychologists appropriately document their professional and scientific work in order to facilitate provision of services by them or by other professionals, to ensure accountability, and to meet other requirements of institutions and the law."

Several of the programs described in this report have taken special steps to ensure that confidentiality is maintained—and to make certain that employees are aware of these guarantees.

- HeartMath did not turn over any individual data to the California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (C-POST), which hired the organization to test its training program with a sample of 90 correctional and institutional parole officers. Furthermore, HeartMath destroyed the codes linking the data to individual officers immediately after the data analysis had been completed. In addition, to maintain confidentiality (and also to avoid inhibiting the officers and agents), no one from C-POST attended the training. Finally, the HeartMath trainers were never told the results of any individual participant's tests both to maintain confidentiality and to ensure they would not develop expectations of the participants that could influence the training.
- The Washington State Department of Corrections Staff Resource Centers keep no records of employee visits or participation in stress program activities unless there is a duty to warn (see the box above).

- The first session of the Stomp Out Stress Program run by the Harris County, Texas, Probation Department emphasized confidentiality, with the trainers explaining that no department employee would ever have access to what was said or written during the training. Indeed, except for peer trainers and Training Branch co-trainers for the organizational session, none of the trainers were department employees and all were licensed clinicians who could not be forced to testify in court regarding what was said at the proceedings.

Robert Glazier, the principal author of the training curriculum, talked about confidentiality precautions to every class and provided a hotline number that any participant with concerns about confidentiality could call to discuss in private (no one called). As the outside evaluator, Glazier was the only person to see the results of the baseline and two posttest participant surveys.

The Bottom Line on Confidentiality: Seek Legal Advice

To minimize legal complications and avoid jeopardizing the entire stress program, program administrators should *consult with a local attorney and state licensing boards regarding their State laws, applicable court rulings, and professional standards pertaining to confidentiality*. The program then needs to:

- (1) make sure every facilitator, trainer, peer supporter, and other program staff member *understands the laws and court rulings*;
- (2) explain to every administrator and supervisor *when confidentiality does and does not apply* so they are comfortable that felonies will be reported to the agency but know they have no right to ask program staff about their clients; and
- (3) make sure line officers and support staff clearly understand *the kinds of information they share* with counselors, trainers, peer supporters, and other program staff *which they can be compelled to reveal in court*.

[P]rogram administrators should consult with a local attorney and state licensing boards regarding their State laws, applicable court rulings, and professional standards pertaining to confidentiality.

Reducing Organizational Sources of Stress

Chapter 2 documented that it is probation and parole agencies themselves that cause the most significant stress for officers—not the work itself. As a result, *a stress program will be only partially successful if it does not seek to work with management to try to reduce the stresses that the agency may be creating for staff.*

Unfortunately, stress program staff often lack the time to work with management to eliminate organizational sources of stress. Some stress program directors feel they have to maintain scrupulous neutrality between labor and management, and that suggesting organizational changes might make them seem pro-labor. Finally, many stress program directors and team members are reluctant to propose organizational changes because they have learned from experience that management will not listen—or listen but say their hands are tied when it comes to making changes.

Despite these barriers, some programs have been successful in working with management to change the agency's operations to reduce stress. Indeed, there are some very simple steps the program and management can work on together to reduce stress.

- (1) Work with supervisors to encourage them to *provide compliments to good workers* on a regular basis. This can be done through seminars for supervisory staff, informally in one-on-one conversations, or during regularly scheduled staff management meetings.
- (2) Encourage staff to *take walks or other forms of exercise* during lunch breaks, and make clear that no one will be penalized for not working straight through the day. The last section of chapter 3, Program Case Studies, describes three programs that have made strenuous efforts to get their staff to exercise during the work day.
- (3) *Involve line staff in some of the decisions* that are made about agency operations. One study found that “. . . those [probation officers] who did not perceive a positive atmosphere for participation in decisions that affect them in the workplace were significantly more likely to . . . be the most stressed.”²

At the first session of the Harris County Stomp Out Stress Program, some officers felt there was no point in participating in the training sessions if their concerns about work-related stress would not be shared with management. As a result, an early exercise that

was intended to have participants write down for their *own* benefit their three most severe sources of stress was changed. Instead of just discussing these stresses, the trainers agreed to collate the forms anonymously and share them with upper management. After the training, the program administrators met with the department director to review the participants' concerns. One repeatedly expressed officer concern focused on the department's audits, which officers perceived negatively—for example, some officers who were overachievers resented the auditors' pointing out minor faults in their work (especially since the officers said they seldom received recognition for their good work). The department had already been looking into revising the auditing form but, because of the officers' concerns, decided to reexamine the form immediately and pay considerably more attention to the audit process—going so far as to at least temporarily halt a point system because of the stress it created. According to Bennett Chapman, the stress program director, “The audit changes were a direct result of the training.”

After the [stress] training, the [Harris County] program administrators met with the department director to review the participants' concerns . . . [B]ecause of the officers' concerns, [the department] decided to reexamine its audit form immediately and pay considerably more attention to the audit process—going so far as to at least temporarily halt a point system because of the stress it created.

Renee Edel, Senior Program Planner for the Cuyahoga County, Ohio, Juvenile Court, included a number of policy recommendations in the Comprehensive Wellness Program final report that reflect comments participants made during the nine training sessions and confirm the types of organizational change that chapter 2 noted could reduce officer stress.

- Develop a mechanism for collecting data from employees on the service needs for clients, on the performance of vendors used by the court, and on procedures that may be able to be streamlined and improved [i.e., increase employee involvement in agency decision making]. Develop a system for evaluating this input and, if it proves worthwhile, operationalize the idea.

- Explore the possibility of instituting a career ladder for workers or, if this is not possible, explore the possibility of training across departments so that employees learn new skills and do not view their jobs as a dead end.
- Conduct interactive communication training for the entire court, including administrators, particularly as it relates to the impact of personality style on interpersonal communication.
- Find a way to reward and recognize the achievements of employees more often . . . and more visibly

Assessing Program Effectiveness

Administrators of any program are often understandably reluctant to evaluate their efforts because they lack time or expertise, or have concerns about violating confidentiality. They may also be apprehensive that the evaluation results will not show that they are doing a good job. However, *program evaluation is essential*:

1. Without a formal assessment, it is very difficult to know *whether the program needs improvement* and what specific changes are needed.
2. Agency heads need the results of evaluations *to convince funding sources of the importance of continuing the program*—and program staff need the results to convince agency heads to continue to request funding for it.

To be effective, program evaluation cannot be an afterthought; rather, *evaluation needs to be a significant focus of the design and planning of the program*. For one thing, without collecting baseline measures (e.g., assessing employees' current stress levels), it is impossible to determine what outcomes the program has achieved. In addition, program evaluation done as an afterthought typically is given short shrift and rushed because staff have decided to conduct an assessment quickly in response to a sudden outside demand—for example, from the agency head or a funding source—for evidence that the program is working.

Programs can implement two types of evaluations: a process evaluation and an outcome evaluation.

Process Evaluation

When program staff judge the quality, adequacy, or appropriateness of *program operations*, the assessment is referred to as a process evaluation. The focus of a process evaluation is the implementation of the program, not program outcomes. There are at least two easy approaches to conducting a process evaluation.

- *Collect data* on the:
 - ✓ nature and number of marketing efforts,
 - ✓ number of clients or client contacts,
 - ✓ types of clients served (officer, supervisor, support staff, family member), nature and number of marketing efforts made,
 - ✓ nature of the clients' problems (e.g., problem with supervisor, domestic violence, alcohol abuse, insomnia, anxiety, marital difficulties),
 - ✓ assistance that was provided on duty versus off duty, and
 - ✓ number and types of referrals to outside sources of further help.

For example, The Counseling Team, the organization with which several probation agencies in Southern California contract for stress services, provides agencies with a contact sheet to distribute to peer supporters on which to log—without the names of colleagues with whom they have talked—whether the person was an officer or support staff, male or female, and other demographic information. After talking with Counseling Team staff, members of the committee that developed the draft policies and procedures for the Fresno, California, Probation Agency peer support program decided that the program coordinator would keep track of peer support activities for internal use only—to document to the department that the peer supporters were active and helpful.

- *Conduct client satisfaction surveys.*
 - ✓ At the end of its new employee training, the Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole hands out a survey that includes questions about the orientation session on the Critical Incident Response Team. Most of the responses, given anonymously, are highly favorable (see the box “Favorable Staff Responses . . .” in chapter 5).
 - ✓ The exit interviews conducted by the outside contractor for the Cuyahoga County, Ohio, Juvenile Court's Comprehensive Wellness Program asked for participant satisfaction information. The data showed that most participants would recommend the program to others, and almost all indicated that they found value in the program.
 - ✓ Once or twice a year, San Bernardino's The Counseling Team hands out anonymous “consumer satisfaction” forms to clients that about 25 percent of the officers and family members return.

Outcome Evaluation

An outcome evaluation is designed to show *the effects* a program has had *on clients and the department as a whole*. Of course, the most compelling evidence of effectiveness is being able to show that the program reduced staff stress levels. This requires administering a stress survey before the program begins and another survey one or more times after the program has become operational or after an individual component has been completed. There are a number of stress surveys available for this purpose. Appendix F provides a survey that the National Institute of Justice has used to evaluate three stress programs for law enforcement officers. The survey represents a synthesis of what appear to be the most reliable questions asked in other surveys while at the same time attempting to keep the survey at a manageable length for staff to complete.

The three examples of outcome evaluations that follow compared stress levels before and after each associated program became operational. While each of the evaluations has weaknesses—primarily not selecting program participants at random and, in two cases, not including a control group—they nonetheless were sufficiently well designed and implemented for the findings to suggest strongly that the programs achieved some of their intended outcomes. As a result, the evaluations were unquestionably worth conducting. Furthermore, for ethical, logistical, and labor management relations reasons it may not always be possible to assign employees randomly to a group that participates in the program and another group that does not. However, as discussed below, one way that the California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (C-POST) overcame these obstacles—an approach sometimes used in biomedical and social science research—was to use a “delayed treatment group” or “waiting control group.” That is, the volunteers for the study who were assigned randomly to the group that did *not* participate in the program were promised that they *would be able to participate* after the volunteers assigned randomly to participate had completed the training and, three months later, along with the nonparticipants, been tested for improvement.

[T]hree examples of outcome evaluations . . . compared stress levels before and after each associated program became operational.

The California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (C-POST) Training

HeartMath, contracted by C-POST to test its standard two-day training package with a sample of California Youth Authority juvenile correctional officers and institutional parole officers, randomly assigned 44 of the 90 volunteers to the training group and 46 to a “waiting” control group that received the training after the intervention group had been trained and retested. HeartMath tested all the volunteers one month before the training and three months after the training. The tests included four pencil-and-paper tests:

- a 28-page personal wellness profile that looks at individuals’ risk factors (e.g., diet, weight, family history, exercise) and then creates a risk profile (see below);
- an assessment of 20 aspects of personal and organizational effectiveness, such as relationships with supervisors, that predict performance and stress;
- an inventory of self-reported physical symptoms; and
- a profile of moods, such as anger and depression, that predict heart problems.

A HeartMath physician tested the volunteers for several baseline physiological conditions, including blood pressure, fasting blood sugar level, and cholesterol level.

Although there were “cross-contamination” effects between the trainees and control group members (some of the trained officers talked with some control group members about the training), three months after the training the trained officers nevertheless demonstrated a number of improvements in physiological variables, and psychological and work-related measures, that members of the control group did not exhibit.

There were no significant differences between the trainees and members of the control group related to fasting glucose levels, total cholesterol, and measures of heart rate variability/autonomic function. However, only the trainees experienced significant reductions in :

- LDL (the “bad” cholesterol), and
- heart rate and both systolic and diastolic blood pressure.

There were also significant reductions in fatigue and anger, along with increased productivity and motivation among the trainees but not among control group members.

The reduction in health risk factors among the trainees were projected to save \$699 for each trained officer but only \$175 for each officer in the control group. Furthermore, these savings were realized in only three months, while data from previous HeartMath research suggest cost savings continue to increase for at least four years after the training.

Because volunteers were assigned randomly to the two groups the findings are not likely to have been the result of chance since the officers who received the training did not differ in any known respects from the officers who were in the control group. However, program participants were not selected randomly—officers volunteered to participate. Because it is possible that the participants had characteristics (e.g., atypically high or low levels of motivation or stress) that were not representative of all officers in Youth Authority institutions, the evaluation results might not predict how the same training would affect other Youth Authority (and Department of Corrections) officers and agents.

The Harris County, Texas, Stomp Out Stress Training Program

The outcomes of the Stomp Out Stress training offered by the Harris County, Texas, Probation Department, were expected to show that:

- (1) officers reporting lower levels of burnout, using a validated burnout measure, and
- (2) an increase in the officer's knowledge of stress, including the stressful elements of the job and methods of reducing stress.

To measure these results, the program administered three participant assessments:

- a pretest administered at the beginning of the first module;
- a posttest one month after the fourth and final module had ended, and
- a second posttest six months after the fourth module had ended.

The agency sent the posttests to participants by internal department mail and surface mail; they were returned by regular surface mail. Of 86 officers who signed up for the training, 31 attended all four training sessions and completed all three assessments.

The test results showed the following:

- There was a statistically significant decrease in officer burnout one month after the training as measured by the officers' levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (for example, feeling callous toward their clients). However, their level of burnout increased six months after the training—but not to the level they were experiencing before the training began.
- By the end of six months their feelings of lack of personal accomplishment reverted to the level they reported before the training began.
- The officers' knowledge about stress increased significantly both one and six months after the training compared with their knowledge before the training.

These findings must be treated with caution because those officers who were most—or least—likely to be able to reduce their stress levels may have chosen to participate.

The Cuyahoga County, Ohio, Comprehensive Wellness Program

The Cuyahoga County, Ohio, Juvenile Court's Comprehensive Wellness Program followed a pre-test, post-test evaluation model. The 60 program participants were all given a pretest prior to attending the training sessions; 29 participants (20 probation officers and 9 detention officers) completed the post-test at the end of the program. The analysis examined changes in self-reported stress among these 29 participants. The data show that participants experienced significant reductions in overall physical and psychological stress symptoms (anxiety, depression) at the end of the program compared with before it began. This finding is especially significant given that most of the participants went into the program reporting relatively infrequent symptoms of stress—that is, there was little room for improvement—yet there was still a statistically significant reduction in stress after they participated in the program. Specifically, participants reported experiencing stress symptoms on average closer to a few times over a six-month period on the post-test compared with an average of closer to once per month on the pre-test.

The program's independent researcher examined data on absenteeism from the agency's human resources unit for three months before the program's start and for the four months while the program was running. Absenteeism rates went down during the program's

operation compared with the period before it began, with the mean number of days absent from work per month declining from .46 to .37. While this decline was not statistically significant, nearly one-third of participants reported in the post-program satisfaction survey (see below) that the amount of time they had to take off work due to stress had decreased—18 percent said it had decreased “greatly.”

Nearly one-third of participants [in The Cuyahoga County, Ohio, Juvenile Court’s Comprehensive Wellness Program] reported in the post-program satisfaction survey . . . that the amount of time they had to take off work due to stress had decreased—18 percent said it had decreased “greatly.”

Thirty-nine participants completed a post-program satisfaction survey. The survey found that:

- Over 92 percent of the 39 participants reported they would recommend the program to other employees.
- Over 61 percent found the program to be “very helpful”; another 33 percent found it to be “somewhat helpful.”
- Almost 67 percent said that by the end of the program they already had begun using the lessons learned; nearly 90 percent thought they would be able to continue to use the lessons they had learned.
- Over 81 percent of participants indicated they had improved their ability to cope with work-related stresses.
- Over 13 percent reported they had improved their communication with coworkers “greatly”; another 26 percent reported “some improvement.”
- Slightly over half felt that communication between themselves and their supervisors had improved.

As with the Harris County evaluation, these results must be viewed with caution because those officers who were most—or least—likely to benefit from the program may have chosen to participate and to answer the surveys.

Anecdotal Evidence Can Be Suggestive

Even without formal evaluations, anecdotal evidence can be helpful in suggesting whether the program is working. A participant in one agency’s stress management training program reported that the session provided very practical advice. For example, a

trainer recommended that officers make priority lists of what really needs to be done and by when, and to keep it in their desks. This participant now makes such a list regularly and reported it helped reduced stress. The participant also recalled being told how to identify different types of stress—identify the symptoms—so that officers can “take a step back and calm down. I’ve used that quite a bit”:

When I was teaching probationers a lesson on understanding the feelings of others—because all probationers think of is themselves—I got angry at a member of the class, felt my heart pounding, and snapped at a kid, “Well, it doesn’t matter with you because you’re headed for prison anyway.” After I saw the look of dismay on the probationer’s face, I remembered the stress training and realized that I was experiencing stress, so I apologized to him. So I recognized my own symptom of stress—snapping at the kid.

Finding Sufficient Money for the Program

The first step in obtaining adequate program funding is ***determining what the program’s funding needs will be***. However, most probation and parole agencies have incomplete information about how much their stress programs cost—or will cost—because of difficulty estimating expenses: separate budget line items for the operation of in-house programs generally do not exist; staff, office space, and equipment may be shared with other agency units; and in-kind contributions of space, supplies, and personnel are often used. Nevertheless, many programs share certain cost elements:

- personnel;
- consultants (e.g., trainers, clinicians);
- rent and utilities;
- vehicles (or mileage reimbursement if personal cars are used) for responding to emergencies and meeting clients away from the program’s offices;
- equipment and supplies (e.g., beepers, business cards, program brochures, training materials, coffee);
- telephone, fax, and postage; and
- travel (e.g., to conferences and seminars).

New programs will incur some one-time startup costs that established programs typically no longer have to pay for, such as initial staff training. Discussions of program costs and, in some cases, detailed line item budgets, for five of the six principal programs described in this report may be found at the end of each case study in chapter 3.

Program staff have used a variety of strategies for minimizing program costs:

- Secure *in-kind* contributions, including space or supplies.
- Devise *alternative staffing configurations*, such as using consultants, volunteers, peer supporters.
- Recruit university professors and graduate students (e.g., with a criminal justice or sociology department) to evaluate the program).
- After hiring outside professionals to provide training, *have the professionals train selected in-house employees (who participated in the training) to conduct future trainings*—a train-the-trainers approach that C-POST has used and Harris County, Texas, plans to use.
- *Network*, that is, refer staff to outside sources of help. For example, Washington State’s Staff Resources Centers provide only short-term counseling and refer long-term clients to outside practitioners.

Washington State’s Staff Resource Centers have been creative in other ways to minimize program costs, including sharing the costs among several Department of Corrections regions and divisions:

- Each of the five Department of Corrections (DOC) regions pays for office space and furniture for the Staff Resource Center branch in its region, as well as for staff travel within the region.
- The DOC’s Emergency Response Department pays for staff training, special equipment (e.g., special jackets to wear during a critical incident), badges, and travel to academies.
- While the Occupational Nurse Consultant salaries are paid through the Department of Corrections’ safety budget, rebates from Washington State workers’ compensation claims pay for some of their equipment and wellness materials.
- Proceeds from vending machines on facility grounds across the State help to fund wellness activities.

| |
|---|
| <p><i>Washington State’s Staff Resource Centers have been creative in [several] . . . ways to minimize program costs . . .</i></p> |
|---|

Program staff can also scour the local and national scene for supplemental sources of funding, including the National Institute of Corrections (for training funds), unions and

associations (for small contributions), State and local governments, and private funding sources including community-based organizations and foundations.

There are several questions about stress programs that remain a subject of debate—controversies that are worth noting here but are beyond the scope of this report to address, much less resolve.

- What should be done with victims who do not want help after a critical incident?
- Should caregivers or peer supporters do things for victims (e.g., telephone a relative, run an errand) or encourage victims to do these things for themselves in an effort to “empower” them?
- Should participation in the program be mandatory or voluntary?
- What is the definition of a critical incident? Pennsylvania’s Board of Probation and Parole definition is “. . . any situation that forces a person to face vulnerability and mortality or what potentially overwhelms a person’s ability to cope.”
- What should the criteria be for identifying incidents that require an organized critical incident response?

The final section of this chapter identifies sources of help in answering these and other questions about setting up and operating an effective stress program.

Sources of Help in Setting Up or Improving a Stress Program

There are several resources for learning more about setting up or improving a stress program.

Materials

Several stress programs have prepared materials that can be useful in planning or improving a stress program for correctional officers. The appendixes to this report

provide some of these materials. Other materials, including information for obtaining them, are listed below. There may be a charge for duplicating and mailing the materials.

After the Violence Video

Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole

In this 23-minute video, two agency staff describe the lack of organized agency response to their needs after they had been involved in critical incidents. A third staff member then describes how the Critical Incident Response Team, not created at the time of the other two employees' critical incidents, provided needed help to this employee.

Mary Achilles
Victim Advocate
Office of the Victim Advocate
1101 South Front Street, Suite 5200
Harrisburg PA 17104-2517
(717) 783-8185
fax (717) 787-0867
Internet:<http://www.ova.state.pa.us>

Stress Education and Training Program for Community Supervision and Corrections Officers

Harris County (Texas) Community Supervision and Corrections Department

This detailed curriculum includes slides for PowerPoint presentations, articles, handouts, and other materials, as well as a step-by-step trainer curriculum.

West Region
Harris County (Texas) Community Supervision and Corrections Department
10585 Westoffice Drive
Houston TX 77042
(713) 953-8210

Peer Support Training Manual

The Counseling Team

This 160-page manual provides extensive information on peer supporter services, basic support methods, listening skills, critical incident stress, grief and bereavement, assessment and referral, and suicide.

Nancy Bohl
Director
The Counseling Team
18981 Business Center Drive, Suite 11
San Bernardino CA 92408
(909) 884-1033
fax (909) 384-0734

Promising Practices and Strategies for Victim Services in Corrections
National Center for Victims of Crime

This 210-page curriculum for training probation, parole, and corrections agencies to respond to victimized staff provides sample State agency policies and procedures for responding to critical incidents. The curriculum includes trainer lesson plans to help workshop participants educate others about staff victimization issues.

Crime Victim Research Specialist
Suite 480
2000 M Street NW
Washington DC 20036
(202) 467-8700

Community Crisis Response Training Curriculum
National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA)

This 40-hour curriculum is designed for trainers to teach agency staff how to be effective peer supporters after a critical incident. Appendix E of this report provides an outline of the curriculum.

John Stein
Deputy Director
National Organization for Victim Assistance
1730 Park Road, N.W.
Washington, DC 20010
202-232-6682
Fax: 202-462-2255
www.try-nova.org

Publications

The endnotes to chapter 2, “The Extent and Sources of Probation and Parole Officer Stress,” reference literature that discusses probation and parole officer stress.

Experts

The individuals identified in the chart are available by telephone or e-mail to provide technical assistance related to stress programming. In addition, the name of the program coordinator, whom readers may call for telephone consultation, follows all but one of the case studies in chapter 3, Program Case Studies.

Individuals with Experience in Stress Programming for Probation and Parole Officers

The following individuals have agreed to respond to telephone calls or e-mails for brief technical assistance with developing or improving a stress program. The individuals are members of the project advisory board, program staff interviewed in the preparation of this report, or both.

| Name | Title or Position | Address | Telephone Numbers | Areas of Experience |
|------------------------|---|--|--|--|
| Richard Faulkner | Correctional Program Specialist, retired, National Institute of Corrections | 718 Gibbon Street Alexandria VA 22314-4108 | (703) 684-7705 fax: (703) 684-9551 rickfaulkner@msn.com | Program planning and startup critical incident response legal liability issues |
| Mark Maggio, Ph.D. | Psychologist and Crisis Intervention Specialist | Federal Judicial Center Thurgood Marshall Federal Judiciary Building One Columbus Circle NE Washington DC 20020-8003 | (202) 502-4139 mmaggio@fjc.gov | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program design • Critical incident response • Suicide and law enforcement • Individual counseling • Crisis consulting for managers/supervisors • Critical incident stress management training |
| Nancy Bohl, Ph.D. | Director | The Counseling Team 1881 Business Center Drive, Suite 11 San Bernardino, CA 92408 | (909) 884-0133 fax: (909) 384-0734 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer support programs • Organizational change • Critical incident response • Individual counseling |
| Risdon N. Slate, Ph.D. | Professor of Criminology; Chair, Department of Sociology and Criminology | Florida Southern College 111 Lake Hollingsworth Drive Lakeland FL 33801 | (863) 680-4339 fax: (863) 616-6407 rslate@flsouthern.edu | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizational change |

¹ Appelbaum, P.S., and T.G. Gutheil, *Clinical Handbook of Psychiatry and the Law*, second edition, Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins, 1991, p. 5.

² Slate, Risdon N.; Terry L. Wells; and W. Wesley Johnson, "Opening the Manager's Door: State Probation Office Stress and Perceptions in Workplace Decision-Making," *Crime and Delinquency*, 2003, 49(4): 3-25.

Appendixes

- A. Stress Inventory Questionnaires
- B. “Day in the Life of a CSO” Video Tape Script
- C. Critical Incident Response Guidelines Incident Protocol
- D. Crisis Response Intervention Guide
- E. National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA), Community Crisis Response Training Agenda
- F. Corrections and Law Enforcement Family Support Program Field Test, Police Officer Survey

Appendix A

Harris County (Texas) Community Supervision and Corrections Department Stomp Out Stress Program Stress Inventory Questionnaires

Stress Inventory Questionnaire

Are you wondering if YOU could benefit from attending the Stomp Out Stress) S.O.S. training series that is being offered in June? Take this short questionnaire and get some insight into what you could be doing to improve your job satisfaction. Put a check mark by all that apply.

Do you find yourself saying or thinking...

I am so burned out!
I need a vacation!
I need a drink!
I can't stand all this change!
My job is really getting to me! I need a new job!
I can't handle all of this stress anymore!
I am so tired all of the time, but I can't sleep!
I'm tired of having headaches!
I'm so forgetful lately!
Every little thing upsets me!
I'm not even sure what is expected of me!
No one appreciates anything I do!
There is so much disorganization in my life!
I can't sleep at night!
I have so much trouble concentrating!
I'm so glad I have ___ days/months/years to retirement!
I'm taking my frustrations out on probationers.
Is this what I spent 4 years in college for?
I feel trapped!

Does your spouse or significant other say to you...

You stay at the office too long!
You never talk to me about your work!
You're always in a bad mood after work!
I'm afraid your job is too dangerous!
Why do you always bring work home?
When is your next raise?
You're no fun anymore!
You're not here to help me with...
You fly off the handle so easily!
You always seem so stressed out!
Why are you so forgetful?
We never spend time together!
You're drinking too much!
You need a vacation!
You never listen to me when we talk!
When can you retire?
Can't you find a new job?
You're never happy anymore!
You've got to get away from there!

I want more job satisfaction, a more positive outlook on my professional future, and (where applicable) a better relationship with my significant other!

Take a look at your responses.

If you and/or your significant other could answer yes to two (2) or more of the above questions, the S.O.S. sessions being offered have the potential to help you improve your life and job situation. Come join us and learn about stress and burnout and – most importantly – what YOU can do to increase your satisfaction with your job and with your life.

Questionnaire

Are you wondering if you could benefit from attending the S.O.S. (Stomp Out Stress) training series that is being offered in June? Take this short questionnaire and get some insight into what you could be doing to improve your job satisfaction. Put a check mark by all that apply.

1. ____ Do you find yourself counting the days to retirement (even if it is 5+ years away?)
2. ____ Has your significant other asked/begged you to find a new job that won't have you coming home tense every day?
3. ____ Do you call in sick more often that you did a year ago?
4. ____ Are you getting angry with probationers and then realizing you aren't really mad at them; you are just taking your frustrations out on them?
5. ____ Have you gained/lost weight recently because of your reaction to things that go on at the job?
6. ____ Are you feeling overwhelmed by the piles of paperwork that seem to be taking on a life of their own on your desk, floor, etc.?
7. ____ Do you sometimes feel resentful that you spent 4+ years in college to shuffle paper and collect money?
8. ____ Do you ever feel trapped in your career and feel frustrated that you can't be happy at work?
9. ____ In the last year, have you lost sleep over worry about your job/career?
10. ____ Do you want to experience satisfaction in your job, a more positive outlook on your professional future, and (where applicable) a better relationship with your significant other?

Take a look at your responses. If you checked even just a few, the S.O.S. sessions being offered have the potential to help you improve your life and job situation. Come join us and learn about stress and burnout and – most importantly – what YOU can do to increase your satisfaction with your job and with your life.

Appendix B

Harris County (Texas) Community Supervision and Corrections Department Stomp Out Stress Program

“Day in the Life of a CSO” Video Tape Script

NOTES FOR "DAY IN THE LIFE OF A CSO" VIDEO TAPE STOMP OUT STRESS (S.O.S.) TRAINING

OPENING SCENE: Waiting room of a regional office. Entering the waiting area, in the order introduced, are probationers played by **Daniel, Cindy, Karmesha, and Mary**. Seated at the receptionist window is **Josette**. In another area of the building are **Lori and Tonya (CSOs)** and **Denise (Supervisor)** in their respective offices (Lori's has laptop computer, phone and messy desk. **Tonya's** has phone and lots of files – also to be used as office of CSO who called in sick). **Daniel** later plays a CSO in **Tonya's** office. (Props needed several files each actor should bring 3, key map, 4 phones, bag of medications, purse, two lap top computers, report forms).

Josette (receptionist): clearly overwhelmed and agitated as each probationer approaches window.

Yakia (crackhead): Signs in (obviously stoned).

Josette (receptionist): gets very agitated with her because her PMR is not filled out (**Josette:** use word "form," not PMR as spouses won't know what that is). Sends **Yakia** to sit down.

Daniel (drunk): Tells receptionist he needs last minute travel permit to Galveston.

Josette (receptionist): Advises **Daniel** his officer is not in but she'll find someone to see him. She calls **Lori** and advises her to see **Daniel** and also tells her that her "crack head" (**Yakia**) is here to see her.

Lori (CSO): Asks why she's being asked to see **Daniel**. It's not her duty day.

Josette (receptionist): Advises supervisor told her the duty officer called in sick and she's the backup duty.

Lori (CSO): frustrated that she wasn't told by supervisor about situation. Advises **Josette** she'll see **Daniel** after she sees **Yakia**.

Daniel (drunk): Goes to window and asks what's taking so long.

Josette (receptionist): Advises **Daniel** she'll call supervisor **Denise** (**Josette** is critical to **Daniel** about **Lori's** work habits).

Denise (supervisor): Answers phone. Forgets she told **Josette** that **Lori** is back up.

Josette (receptionist): Leaves out the facts that **Lori** has a "stoned" probationer with an appointment waiting, that **Daniel** does not have an appointment and that **Lori** was not informed the duty was out sick (implying **Lori** is refusing to see **Daniel**)

Denise (supervisor): Feet up on desk reading newspaper. Calls **Lori**. Advises her she needs to do her "duty".

Lori (CSO): Advises **Denise** of situation.

Denise (supervisor): Asks **Lori** to see **Daniel** when she finishes with her probationer. Hangs up.

Denise (supervisor): Calls **Lori** again. "By the way, I noticed you haven't done all your computer entries."

Lori (CSO): The computer is down again. I'll get it done as soon as I can but I have to see these people. Hangs up.

Denise (Supervisor): Calls Lori again: "Also, I need your time sheet completed by noon."

Lori (CSO): But it's only Wednesday.

Denise (supervisor): With the holiday coming up, we need it early. I sent you an e-mail that I suppose you didn't read since you're having computer problems. Just guess how many hours you're going to work for the rest of the week.

Lori (CSO): Frustrated. Confirms she'll complete these additional duties and hangs up. Escorts Yakia to her office.

Yakia (crackhead): Exhibits lots of symptoms of drug usage (just as she did in previous skit).

Lori (CSO): Calls UA monitor to set up specimen collection. Rolls over to receptionist – advised monitors are at lunch. Walks off with Nakia to collect specimen herself. LEAVES SCENE FOR NOW.

Cindy (mental health patient): Enters waiting area and goes to window. Asks for Lori.

Josette (receptionist): Pages Lori (with very aggravated tone).

Lori (CSO): Runs back to her office, answers phone.

Josette (receptionist): You've got another crazy one here to see before the guy who wants the travel permit. There's also a call holding (the mother of a probationer who is suicidal).

Lori (CSO) takes the number of the mother to call her right back. Goes to Daniel's CSO's office – mess – finds out he's out of 174th court that requires court has to be called for travel approval. Furthermore, he's delinquent on his fees. Goes to waiting room and tells Daniel she's going to get someone else to take care of him as the court needs to be contacted and she doesn't have time. She escorts Cindy to her office.

Cindy (mental health patient): Begins to give details of her arrest (initial office visit).

Lori (CSO): Realizes she can't spend time today for Cindy's assessment and initial office visit. Explains to Cindy that she has to come back in two weeks for a long interview where she can tell her side of the story and answer some questions. Advises her she can't miss the appointment as CSO only has 2 months to do the interview and she missed her first two appointments already. As she prepares to give Cindy a new appointment, Denise (supervisor) calls again.

Denise (supervisor): "I overheard your conversation with that mental health probationer and wonder if we should put her on the Mental Health Caseload. Go ahead and tell her she will see Jesse next OV.

Lori (CSO): Agrees and is quite relieved to get rid of this case. She reschedules Cindy and Cindy leaves.

DIFFERENT OFFICE – TONYA (CSO)

Josette (receptionist): Sitting at window on personal call.

Karmesha (credit card abuser/manipulative): Checks in at window, copping a minor attitude.

Josette (receptionist): Becomes very antagonistic toward Karmesha and gets her to sit down after they have an exchange of words.

Mary (old lady): Walks up to window and checks in. Sits down next to **Karmesha**.

Karmesha (credit card abuser/manipulative): Finds out from **Mary** that they both have **Tonya** for an officer. She starts to "bad-mouth" **Tonya** and begins to exploit **Mary**, trying to get her PIN number for a credit card. She even gets **Mary** to give up her purse.

Tonya (CSO): Goes to escort **Mary** to office and witnesses exchange between **Mary** and **Karmesha**. Asks **Mary** about it in the office.

Tonya (CSO): Calls **Denise** (supervisor) to come to her office to have **Mary** report what happened.

Mary (old lady): **Mary** tells about what **Karmesha** said about **Tonya** and what **Karmesha** was trying to do.

Denise (supervisor): Thanks **Mary** for the information and asks her to wait in the lobby.

Tonya goes to the lobby with **Mary** to retrieve **Mary's** purse and goes back to her office to discuss it with **Denise**.

Tonya (CSO): **Karmesha's** case is already in court with a violation report.

Denise (supervisor): Let's change the violation report to a motion to revoke. Get it typed up by this afternoon and I'll sign it. She asks **Tonya** to bring **Karmesha** back.

BACK IN THE WAITING ROOM:

On the way to **Tonya's** office, **Karmesha** talks about the way **Josette** treated her. Threatens she will go to the judge.

Denise (supervisor) Advises **Karmesha** she will have her "audience" with the judge after all as her case is with the court already for violations. Furthermore, her attempts to get **Mary's** purse and take her numbers will be discussed with the judge. **Karmesha** is advised it is to her benefit to cooperate. **Karmesha** calms down and is advised she will be told when she has to talk to the judge. She asks why her case is in court and is reminded of her violations. **Denise** leaves **Tonya's** office. As she leaves, **Daniel (CSO)** stops her (holding a file).

Daniel (CSO): I know you're not my supervisor but mine is out sick and I have a case I want to staff with you, one that has me worried.

Denise (supervisor): And it can't wait until your supervisor gets back?

Daniel (CSO): You see, this guy (Hank Gangster) is very likely to commit another crime and I think I need to talk to the judge about it but I need to get a supervisor's approval. He's told me some scary things and others have called me about him. I did a field visit to his house and it made me nervous. I never felt that way on a field visit before.


Denise (supervisor): Well, I'm sure you were safe enough in that area of town. No one else has had trouble there. I think this case can wait. It doesn't sound like you have anything solid on this guy.

Daniel (CSO): "Whatever." He walks away, frustrated. **Daniel** hears a page and calls from **Tonya's** office. It's a judge and he wants to see the Hank Gangster file right away (the one he just tried to staff with **Denise**!). He runs out of office with file as **Tonya** and **Lori** run out, saying, "Just another day in the life of a CSO!"

Appendix C

Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT)

Critical Incident Response Guidelines Incident Protocol

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| <p>Commonwealth of Pennsylvania</p>  <p>Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole</p> | <p>Volume III CHAPTER XI</p> <p>Procedure 11.4</p> | <p>Replaces No. New</p> |
| <p>Chapter Title OFFICE OF THE VICTIM ADVOCATE</p> | <p>Date of Issue 06/21/02</p> | |
| <p>Subject CRITICAL INCIDENT RESPONSE GUIDELINES INCIDENT PROTOCOL</p> | <p>Effective Date 06/21/02</p> | |

1:1. Notification Requirements

In an effort to meet the needs of PBPP staff, it is suggested that staff report if they are being subjected to victimization and/or are aware of another Board employee being victimized. The reporting mechanism for regular business hours (8:30-5 p.m.) shall be through the established chain of command. After business hours, weekends and holidays, the contact shall be made to the Operations Monitoring Center 1-800-932-4857 where information will be collected and appropriate notifications as outlined in this protocol will be made.

1:2. Definitions

Ancillary Staff: For the purpose of critical incident operations, staff required to supplement Senior Management Staff in clerical or similar duties.

Chaplaincy Program: Ten (10) teams of clergy representing the religious affiliations of the staff complement for the Allentown, Altoona, Chester, Erie, Harrisburg, Mercer, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Scranton and Williamsport Districts to assist in responding to incidents.

Critical Incident: A critical incident is any situation that forces a person to face vulnerability and mortality or that potentially overwhelms a person's ability to cope.¹ Critical incidents are usually sudden and unexpected. They can jeopardize one's sense of self-control and disrupt one's beliefs and values. They can affect a person physically and/or emotionally. Death, serious bodily injury or threat of death or serious bodily injury shall, in all cases, be considered a critical incident.

A critical incident requires Response Center activation and mobilization of a critical incident response team.

Critical Incident Response Team: Critical Incident Response Teams are Board staff (peers) selected and trained in crisis and victimization support. Three (3) teams comprising of approximately 15-20 members represent the Eastern, Central, Western regions, their District Offices, Sub-Offices, Central Office, and state and local correctional facilities.

¹ *Crime Victims in Corrections: Implementing the Agenda for the 1990s*, op. cit.

Some team members may be selected purposively based upon their skills, abilities and experiences. Other team members may be selected as volunteers respective to their interest to serve in various capacities.

Critical Incident Response Team Coordinator: Person responsible for the coordination and supervision of the critical incident response team. Assigns team leader for on-scene coordination. Communicates with CIO regarding team information during response. Updates and maintains teams' information. Conducts team meetings and arranges additional training. Provides follow-up to the team once on site interventions are finished. May be on scene to provide additional support to team members.

Critical Incident Response Team Leader: Assigned by the Critical Incident Team Coordinator as the person responsible for the local supervision and the coordination of the team while on site of the critical incident; reports to the Critical Incident Officer and the Critical Incident Response Team Coordinator.

Incident: Any form of victimization or damage to property.

Incident Officer: The Incident Officer is the Regional Director or Board Secretary responsible for on-scene management, coordination and supervision of staff and services.

Major Incident: An incident causing displacement of staff, loss or destruction of Board or personal property and requiring substantive Board decision-making and resources. A critical incident response team may be activated and mobilized as required. Considered an extraordinary occurrence requiring an operational activation of the Response Center.

Mental Health Professional: A mental health professional may include a psychiatrist, psychologist, clinical social worker or a person trained in dealing with post traumatic stress or critical incident debriefing.

Minor Incident: An incident handled within the district with local resources but reported through the chain-of-command.

Monitoring Center: The Monitoring Center (Room 187A) is located at the Central Office of the Board. The Monitoring Center will be an initial point of contact for all staff for the notification of victimization and critical incidents. The Monitoring Center will be in operation 24 hours daily and will be accessible through a toll-free (800) telephone number. The toll-free telephone number is 800-932-4857.

Response Center: The Response Center is located in the Executive Conference Room (Room 103) at the Central Office of the Board. The Center contains necessary communication and other equipment for the Chairman, Senior Management Staff and ancillary staff to manage, coordinate, and supervise all critical incident operations in conjunction with the on-scene Incident Officer. The Response Center phone number is 717-772-3783.

Senior Management Staff: Members of Senior Staff include the Board Secretary, Chief Counsel, Director of Human Resources, Director of the Office of Communications and Legislative Affairs, Director of the Office of Management Services, Director of Probation and Parole Services, Director of the Office of Professional Responsibility and the Victim Advocate.

Victimization: Any violence, threats of violence, intimidation, extortion, theft of property, damage to one's reputation or any other act that inflicts damage, instills fear, or threatens one's sensibilities.²

1:3. Chairman and Senior Staff Responsibilities

The following responsibilities are viewed as general and are considered for purposes of responding to an incident by ensuring a safe environment to Board staff and their families.

Board Chairman maintains overall and final decision-making authority over staff and response to any incident involving Board staff and resulting impact on their families.

This position and responsibility may not be delegated, given the availability and use of telecommunication equipment.

Board Secretary/ Central Office Critical Incident Officer maintains authority and access to offender record information. The Board Secretary is responsible for maintaining contact with Board Members, communicating incident status and providing information as required.

Chief Counsel shall provide counsel to the Chairman, Board Members, Senior Staff and, where appropriate, Board personnel, on legal matters associated with an incident. May also function as liaison with outside counsel and law enforcement.

Director of the Office of Communications and Legislative Affairs shall coordinate media relations and be responsible for any and all information about an incident that may be provided or released intra-agency and outside of the Board. This may include news media; other law enforcement agencies; local, state, and federal government officials; ancillary agencies; and, Board staff and their families.

Director of Human Resources shall be responsible for personnel information and records, employee benefits, union relations and employee assistance programs in response to an incident and victimization.

² Parsonage, William H. and W. Conway Bushey, "The Victimization of Pennsylvania Probation and Parole Workers in the Line of Duty," A Survey, The Pennsylvania State University, 1988.

Director of the Office of Management Services shall have responsibility over all financial issues, equipment and property, leased or owned by the Board, which may be involved in an incident. Responsible for notification to other state agencies as required.

Director of Probation and Parole Services shall be responsible for all staff and field operations at the District level or institution where an incident may be located. Responsibilities may include requesting an investigation, assigning or reassigning staff, initiating, suspending or modifying operations or procedures in response to an incident.

Director of the Office of Professional Responsibility shall be responsible for investigating the circumstances of an incident as determined and directed by the Chairman. Responsibilities also may include threat assessment and protective intelligence activities of a critical incident. The Director shall also cooperate and assist local law enforcement agencies during and after an incident.

Victim Advocate shall be responsible for assisting in coordinating emotional support and information to primary, secondary and ancillary victims and their families.

1:4. Ancillary Personnel

The Chairman's Secretary shall be stationed in the Response Center. Duties may include the recording and documenting information, obtaining information and making inquiries, and facilitating general operations of the Response Center.

The Board Members' Secretary shall be responsible for triage and directing telephone calls and inquiries made pursuant to a critical incident to the Response Center.

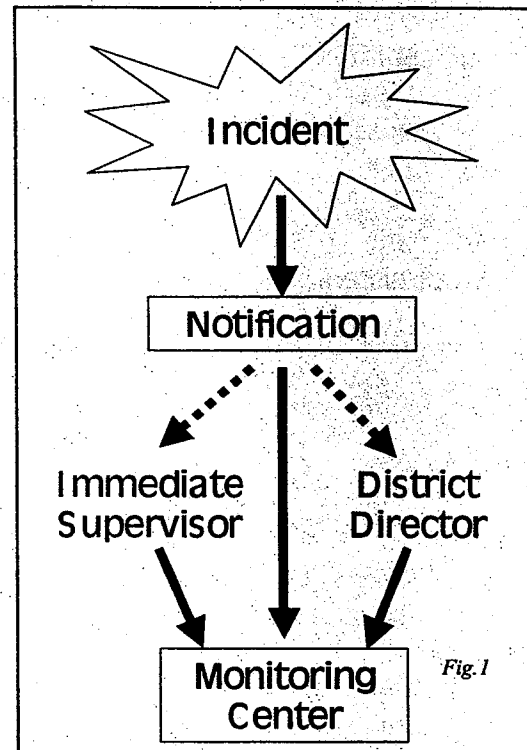
Secretary to the Director of the Office of Management Services shall be designated as backup to either the Chairman's Executive Secretary or Board Members' Executive Secretary and shall perform those duties as necessary.

Secretary to the Director of Human Resources shall be designated as backup to either the Chairman's Executive Secretary or Board Members' Executive Secretary and shall perform those duties as necessary.

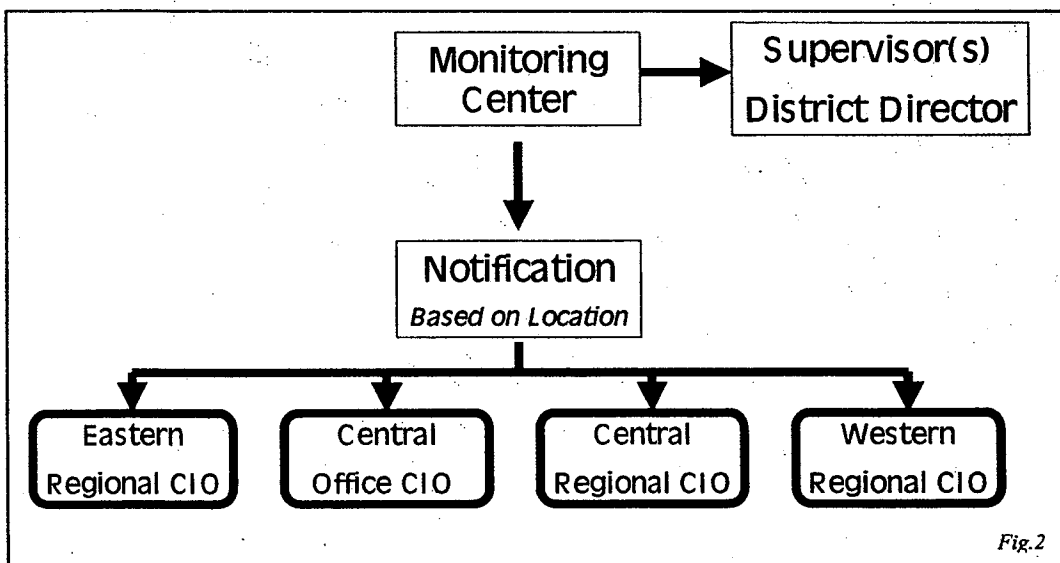
1.5. Critical Incident Process

Immediately upon the discovery of any real or perceived incident, it is the duty of all staff to provide notification without hesitation or delay. During regular business hours, notification must be to both the Operations Monitoring Center at (717) 787-1877 and through the chain of command.

Should staff report an incident to their immediate supervisor or district director during regular business hours it is the duty of the immediate supervisor and or district director to insure that notification to the Operations Monitoring Center occurs. After regular business hours, weekends and holidays, notification should be made directly to the monitoring center at 1-800-932-4857 where information will be collected and appropriate notifications as outlined in this protocol will be made.



The purpose and responsibility of the Monitoring Center is to be a communications conduit. Information is received and passed on to the critical incident officer(s), district director(s), supervisor(s) and other personnel as directed. The Monitoring Center has no decision-making authority pursuant to triage and operational response. Upon notification, activation and instruction by the Director of Human Resources, the Monitoring Center shall transfer all incident operations to the Response Center. Response to an incident will be coordinated and managed by region as determined by the location of the incident. (Fig. 2)



The Monitoring Center will ascertain and record all information as required (Fig.3) and contact the regional critical incident officer and staffs' immediate supervisor(s) and district director. (Fig.4)

INCIDENT REPORT FORM

Incident Date: _____ Time: _____

Incident Location: _____

Numerical Address: _____

Descriptive Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Township/Municipality: _____

Brief Description

Source Name:

☐ Board Staff

☐ Police

☐ Coroner

☐ Hospital

☐ Other (Specify): _____

☐ Contact Number(s): _____

Primary Persons Involved

Fig.3

NOTIFICATION OF CRITICAL INCIDENT OFFICER

☐ Eastern ☐ Central ☐ Western ☐ Central Office

Date: _____ Time: _____

Method: ☐ Home Phone ☐ Work Phone

☐ Cellular Phone ☐ Radio

☐ Pager ☐ In person

Attempt Log

Date

Time

Method

Results

☐ Notification of Immediate Supervisor/Deputy Director

Date: _____ Time: _____

Method: ☐ Home Phone ☐ Work Phone

☐ Cellular Phone ☐ Radio

☐ Pager ☐ In person

Attempt Log

Date

Time

Method

Results

☐ Notification of District Director

Date: _____ Time: _____

Method: ☐ Home Phone ☐ Work Phone

☐ Cellular Phone ☐ Radio

☐ Pager ☐ In person

Attempt Log

Date

Time

Method

Results

Fig.4

The Board requires that telephone contact be made to office, residence, cellular phone or pager. Unsuccessful attempts to provide notification does not satisfy the duty to provide notification. Notification via answering machine, voice or electronic mail or leaving a message with another person is not permitted. All actual and attempted contacts, including date and time will be documented. Verification that the appropriate Board staff has received notification is required. If a person cannot be contacted, due to their unavailability, higher-level management or superiors in the immediate chain-of-command must be notified.

The critical incident officer shall ascertain all relevant information and triage the incident. Triage shall be defined as the process of picking, sorting, choosing and prioritizing information or elements of an incident. Triage is designed to affect the way the Board can prepare, plan and react to an incident to ensure that available resources are assigned in the most effective and time-efficient manner. Triage also refers to the initial identification of victims and other people on scene or affected by the incident. (Fig.5)

The critical incident officer shall determine the initial incident classification. The classification can be downgraded or upgraded based upon additional information or after further consultation with the Director of Probation and Parole Services or the Response Center. The Chairman has final decision-making authority in all classifications and matters pertaining to incidents. (Fig.6)

Brief Description

Classification

☐ Accident ☐ Motor Vehicle Accident

☐ Anxiety Reaction ☐ Non-Injury Assault

☐ Bomb Threat ☐ Physical Injury

☐ Death ☐ Physical Threat

☐ Fire/Arson ☐ Serious Injury

☐ Hostage ☐ Suicide (or Threat)

☐ Intimidation ☐ Use of Deadly Force

☐ Medical ☐ Use of Force

☐ Other (Specify): _____

Incident Date: _____ Time: _____

Incident Location:

Numerical Address: _____

Descriptive Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Township/Municipality: _____

Staff Involved: _____

Fig.5

Incident Determination

☐ **Critical Incident with Victimization** requiring Response Center operational response and Critical Incident Response Team

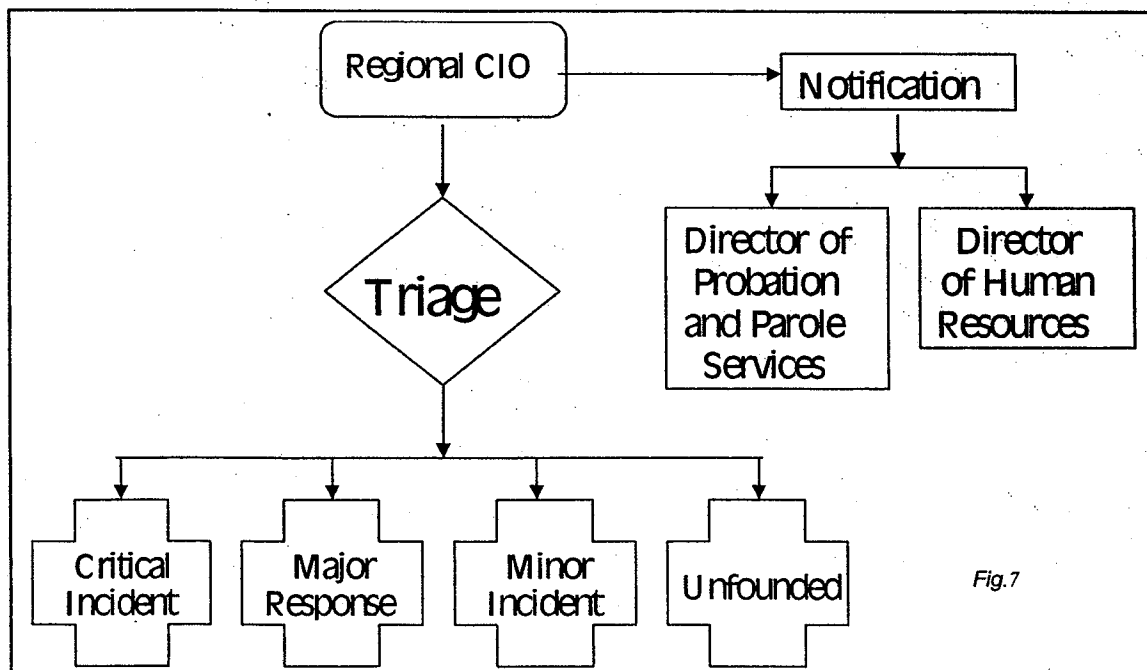
☐ **Major Incident** requiring Response Center operational response

☐ **Minor Incident** not requiring Response Center response

☐ **Unfounded**

Fig.6

The critical incident officer shall determine the severity and classification of the incident (critical incident, major response, minor incident or unfounded) and concurrently notify the Director of Probation and Parole Services and the Director of Human Resources. (Fig.7) At their discretion, the critical incident officer may delegate the Monitoring Center with the responsibility to notify the Director of Probation and Parole Services and the Director of Human Resources.

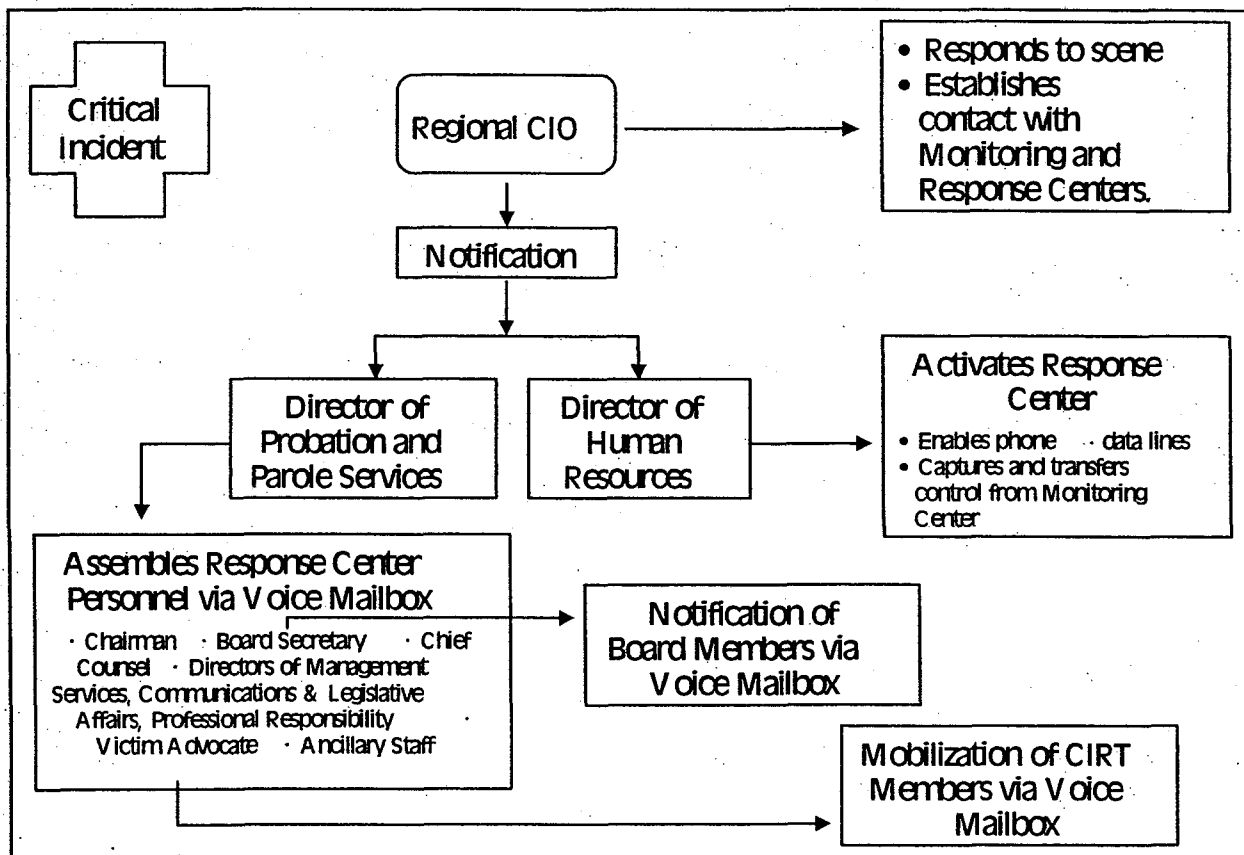


When a critical incident or major incident is determined, the Response Center shall be activated immediately and all personnel shall be notified. (Fig.8)

The Director of Probation and Parole Services shall notify group 1 (Chairman and Senior Staff) and (the Victim Advocate) and give a brief description of the incident and instructions to report immediately to the Response Center.

The Chairman and Senior Management Staff will proceed to the Response Center. The Monitoring Center will maintain contact with the Incident Officer, Chairman, Senior and Ancillary Staff until the Response Center is operational and they are directed to transfer operations.

The Director of Human Resources shall be responsible for the activation and setup of the Response Center and transfer of operations from Monitoring Center.



The Board Secretary shall notify group 2 (Board Members) with a brief description of the incident. The Board Secretary will periodically update Board Members on the incident status.

The Critical Incident Response Team Coordinator shall notify groups 3,4,5 (Regional Team Members) with instructions on where to report.

All decisions pursuant to a critical or major incident will be formulated and made by the Response Center as authorized by the Chairman.

Appendix D

Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT)

Crisis Response Intervention Guide

PBPP CIRT

Crisis Response Intervention Guide

This form was created as a guide to be used when facilitating a Crisis Intervention.

Introduction:

- Introduce yourself and any other member from the team.
- State you are sorry (name the incident) had happened. The team is here to help the group talk about the (incident), provide time to describe your reactions, and predict and prepare for possible future events.

Ground Rules:

(Safety and Security)

- The group is asked to keep what is said confidential.
- Participants are permitted to leave the room but someone will follow them out to check on them.
- Please turn off any cell phones or pagers.
- Describe the scribes role and that the notes will be destroyed after the intervention.
- The session is not a critique of what happened but a review of their reactions.
- Respect each participants reaction no verbal or physical abuse toward others is permitted.
- We will talk about: How the participants reacted or are reacting, How love ones reacted or are reacting, and expectations for the future.

Intervention:

(Ventilation and Validation)

1. Ask Participants to describe their reaction to the _____.
 - Where were they when it happened/or when they heard?
 - Who were they with?
 - What did they see, hear, smell, or touch at the time?
 - How did you react?
2. Ask participants to describe their reaction now since the time of the _____.
 - What are some memories that stand out since the _____.
 - What has happened in the last 48hrs? What do you remember seeing or hearing?
 - How did you react?

(Predict and Prepare)

3. Ask participants to think about what has happened - As you think about what has happened, what do you see for the future?
 - After everything you have been through (name of incident), what do you think will happen at your job in the next few days?
 - How has _____ affect your family and how will it continue to do so?
 - Solicit some coping strategies that have helped them in the past when faced with difficult situations.

Summary of the Intervention:

- Review the scribe notes, focusing on feeling words.
- Indicate the reactions from the scribe notes are all normal reactions to this type of event in their lives.
- Address expectations that were mentioned and add any others not addressed.
- Reassure participants of useful coping strategies.

Close the group:

- Thank the group for their participation.
- Repeat again that you are sorry for the _____.
- Address any additional questions or comments.
- Destroy the scribe notes.
- Give out any handouts available.
- Give the following referral #'s: **SEAP: 1-800-692-7459** and **OVA: 1-800-563-6399**.
- Mention that you and the team members will be available for a little while after the intervention.

Appendix E

National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA)

Community Crisis Response Training Agenda

National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA) Community Crisis Response Training

Agenda¹

Day One

| | |
|---------------|--|
| 8:30 - 9:30 | Introductions |
| 9:30 - 10:30 | Orientation to Crisis Response Teams <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Videotape or• Exercise: diagramming the disaster• Break (Small group choice) |
| 10:30 - 11:00 | Discussion of videotape |
| 11:00 - 12:00 | Overview of crisis response <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The trauma schema• Adaptive capacities of individual response |
| 12:00 - 2:00 | Lunch and crisis team discussions |
| 2:00 - 3:30 | Trauma response: internal factors <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Physical responses to crisis• Emotional responses to crisis• Brain responses to trauma |
| 3:30 - 3:45 | Break |
| 3:45 - 5:30 | Trauma response: external factors <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Time dimensions• Space dimensions• Role dimensions• Disaster types• Unique attributes of disasters |

Day Two

| | |
|---------------|--|
| 8:30 - 9:30 | Crisis intervention <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Purpose and value of crisis intervention• Elements of crisis intervention Safety and security Ventilation and validation Prediction and preparation |
| 9:30 - 10:45 | Crisis intervention exercises (small groups) Break (Small group choice) |
| 10:45 - 12:00 | Group crisis intervention <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Goals of group interventions• Comparative basic models• Description of NOVA's Model |

¹ The trainer may alter the timing and sequence of the topics.

| | |
|--------------|--|
| 12:00 - 1:30 | Lunch and crisis team discussions (Lunch break, small group choice) |
| 1:30 - 2:30 | Overview of death issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Videotape • Discussion |
| 2:30 - 3:15 | The impact of death <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reactions to death • Fears and anxieties about death • Anger • Guilt • Shame |
| 3:15 - 3:30 | Break |
| 3:30 - 4:00 | Death and loss <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The grieving process • Types of grief • Traumatic grief • Hints for helping |
| 4:00 - 5:00 | Death notification <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Techniques of death notification • Hints for helping |

Day Three

| | |
|---------------|---|
| 8:30 - 9:30 | Long-term stress reactions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview • Posttraumatic stress reactions • Long-term crisis reactions |
| 9:30 - 10:30 | Videotape |
| 10:30 - 10:45 | Break |
| 10:45 - 11:30 | Post-trauma counseling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose of PTC for crisis responders • Elements of post-trauma counseling • Education, experience, and energy • Rehearsal, reassurance, and referral • Activism, advocacy, and actualization |
| 11:30 - 12:30 | Spiritual dimensions in crisis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why spiritual issues are important • Guiding spiritual discussions • Hints for helping |
| 12:30 - 1:30 | Lunch |
| 1:30 - 2:45 | Coordinating a community crisis response team Goals of CRT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning for a CRT • On-scene response process • Post-crisis follow-up |
| 2:45 - 3:15 | Working with the media |

| | |
|-------------|-------------------------------------|
| 3:15 - 3:30 | Break |
| 3:30 - 4:30 | Local crisis response planning |
| 4:30 - 5:30 | Crisis team meetings (small groups) |

Day Four

| | |
|---------------|---|
| 8:30 - 10:30 | Simulated group crisis intervention <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purposes of the simulation • Simulation activity • Post-simulation discussion |
| 10:30 - 10:45 | Break |
| 10:45 - 11:00 | Questions and answers |
| 11:00 - 12:00 | Case study presentations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose of the presentations • Presentations and critiques • Lessons learned |
| 12:00 - 1:00 | Lunch |
| 1:00 - 2:00 | Case study presentations (cont.) |
| 2:00 - 3:30 | Cultural issues |
| 3:30 - 3:45 | Break |
| 3:45 - 5:30 | Continuum of age |

Day Five

| | |
|---------------|---|
| 8:30 - 10:00 | Review and questions |
| 10:00 - 10:15 | Break |
| 10:15 - 11:30 | Stress of caregivers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theories of stress reactions • Burn-out • Countertransference and vicarious victimization • "Compassion fatigue" • Constructivist self-development changes • Mitigation of stress reactions • Useful coping strategies |
| 11:30 - 12:30 | Practice group crisis intervention |
| 12:30 - 1:30 | Lunch |
| 1:30 - 3:30 | Practice group crisis intervention (cont.) |
| 3:30 - 4:30 | Certification requirements and opportunities |
| 4:30 - 5:30 | Concluding remarks and graduation |

Appendix F

Corrections and Law Enforcement Family Support Program Field Test

Police Officer Survey

CORRECTIONS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAM FIELD TEST

POLICE OFFICER SURVEY

Abt Associates Inc.

INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO COMPLETE THE SURVEY

1. Why are you being asked to complete this survey?

- The National Institute of Justice (NIJ), U.S. Department of Justice recently provided grant funding to your department to implement a program focusing on the prevention and reduction of stress among officers and their families as part of a field test of the Corrections and Law Enforcement Family Support Program.
- In collaboration with NIJ, Abt Associates is asking officers and their spouses, or partners, about their current levels of stress, the causes and consequences of stress.
- The results of these surveys will help inform the U.S. Department of Justice, as well as police officials nationwide, on how to develop and implement more effective officer and family support programs in the future.

2. How should I complete the survey?

The survey is made up of multiple choice and fill-in-the-blank questions. Check the box, or circle the number, to answer multiple-choice items. A blank sheet of paper is attached to the survey if you need more space or you want to add comments about the survey.

Do not place your name or any other personal information anywhere on the survey.

3. What if I do not know the answer to a question?

Simply leave the answer blank – do not check a response if you do not know the answer to the question.

4. What do I do with the survey when I complete it?

Place the completed survey in the attached envelope, seal the envelope and put the sealed envelope in the mail. Please do not write on the envelope. Please do not return the envelope to anyone in your department.

5. What if I have questions about items on the questionnaire?

Please call Abt Associates - Peter Finn at (617) 349-2739.

SECTION A INFORMATION ABOUT YOURSELF

1. What is your sex? (please check one)

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male

2. What is your race? (please check one)

- ☐ White
- ☐ African American
- ☐ Hispanic
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Other

3. What is your age? ____ (years old)

4. Highest grade level completed? ____

5. Years you have been a sworn police officer?
____ (years)

6. Current marital status (please check one)

- ☐ Married
- ☐ Single
- ☐ Divorced
- ☐ Widowed

7. Number of children under 21 years of age currently living with you? ____ (children)

8. Do you work rotating shifts? Yes No If No, what regular shift do you normally work?

- ☐ Day
- ☐ Evening
- ☐ Midnight
- ☐ Other

(specify) _____

SECTION B YOUR STRESS LEVELS

Stress is a body's response to the perception of danger, as well as exposure to a wide variety of stressors. Stressors can include things that happen at work, family problems and many other day-to-day circumstances that police officers experience and affect their families. The consequences of prolonged exposure to stress can result in health problems, difficulty in eating, sleeping and making decisions, as well as feelings of anger or depression.

9. In general, how would you describe the overall level of stress that you are currently experiencing *from all sources in your life combined*?

- Tremendous stress
- Significant stress
- Some stress
- No stress

10. In general, how would you describe the overall level of stress that you are currently experiencing that is *work related*?

- Tremendous stress
- Significant stress
- Some stress
- No stress

11. In general, how would you describe the overall level of stress that you are currently experiencing that is *family related*?

- Tremendous stress
- Significant stress
- Some stress
- No stress

12. In general, how would you describe the overall level of stress that you are currently experiencing *from sources other than or your family?*

Temendous stress
Significant stress
Some stress
No stress

13. In general, would you say your health is (check one)

Excellent
Very Good
Good
Fair
Poor

14. Do you currently have:

High Blood Pressure
High Cholesterol
Stomach problems
Difficulty sleeping
Frequent headaches
Frequent back or neck aches

SECTION C SOURCES OF STRESS

15. Stress can come from a number of sources. One of the sources for you may be the *organization* you work for. Below is a list of possible sources of stress you may have experienced as a result of your organization. Please rate the level of stress for each possible factor over the past three months.

-3 = Very negative effect, -2 = Somewhat negative effect, -1 = Minor negative effect, 0 = Does not cause stress (please check the appropriate box for each)

| | -3 | -2 | -1 | 0 |
|---|----|----|----|---|
| Mandatory overtime | | | | |
| New chief | | | | |
| Rotating shift work | | | | |
| Not enough officers in the department | | | | |
| Involuntary transfer | | | | |
| Paperwork | | | | |
| Lack of opportunity for career advancement | | | | |
| Lack of influence on policy and decision making in the department | | | | |
| Substandard or insufficient equipment | | | | |
| Lack of adequate training | | | | |
| Lack of adequate supervision | | | | |
| Lack of support from supervisors | | | | |
| Supervisor leadership styles | | | | |
| Inadequate recognition for good work | | | | |
| Second guessing of your actions by supervisors | | | | |
| Poor communication of rules, changing rules, or inconsistent rules | | | | |
| Inconsistent discipline and enforcement of rules | | | | |
| Uncertainty about whether to "go by the book" or exercise discretion | | | | |
| Role conflict (responsibility for enforcing the law versus providing service to citizens) | | | | |
| Perceived favoritism regarding assignments and promotions | | | | |
| Problems with coworkers | | | | |
| Grapevine/gossip | | | | |
| Denied a promotion | | | | |
| Labor-management dispute | | | | |

16. Another of the sources of stress for you may be *the job itself*. Below is a list of possible sources of stress you may have experienced as a result of your job. Please rate the level of stress for each possible factor over the past three months.

-3 = Very negative effect, -2 = Somewhat negative effect, -1 = Minor negative effect, 0 = Does not cause stress (please check the appropriate box for each)

| | -3 | -2 | -1 | 0 |
|--|----|----|----|---|
| Voluntary overtime | | | | |
| Doing community policing (for example, giving a talk; having responsibility for solving problems) | | | | |
| Doing too much "social work" and not enough law enforcement | | | | |
| Danger of being hurt by suspects (for example, assault, shooting) | | | | |
| Actual violence (for example, assault, shooting) | | | | |
| Other critical incidents (for example, being badly injured in a motor vehicle accident; death of another officer on the job) | | | | |
| Exposure to victims (for example, badly injured traffic accident victims, domestic violence victims, corpses) | | | | |
| Job not what you expected it would be | | | | |
| Inadequate pay | | | | |
| Working a second job because of inadequate pay | | | | |
| Concern about availability of backup | | | | |
| Special assignments (for example, undercover duty, death notification, desk duty) | | | | |
| Sexual harassment or discrimination | | | | |
| Citizen demands, dishonesty, and cheating | | | | |
| Feeling incompetent to do the job properly | | | | |
| Having to learn to use new technology (for example, on-board computers) | | | | |
| Concern about contracting air- and blood-borne diseases from arrestees | | | | |
| Threat of lawsuits | | | | |
| Internal affairs investigation | | | | |
| Disciplinary action | | | | |

17. Another of the sources of stress for you may be *family or other personal events*. Below is a list of possible sources of stress you may have experienced as a result of other events. Please rate the level of stress for each possible factor over the past three months.

-3 = Very negative effect, -2 = Somewhat negative effect, -1 = Minor negative effect, 0 = Does not cause stress (please check the appropriate box for each)

| | -3 | -2 | -1 | 0 |
|--|----|----|----|---|
| Marriage | | | | |
| Divorce | | | | |
| Separation | | | | |
| Death of an immediate family member (spouse or partner, parent, child) | | | | |
| Pregnancy | | | | |
| Birth or adoption of a child | | | | |
| Serious trouble with your children | | | | |
| Serious illness you developed | | | | |
| Serious illness among immediate family members (spouse or partner, parent, child) | | | | |
| Serious accident you suffered (outside of work) | | | | |
| Serious accident among immediate family member (spouse or partner, parent, child) | | | | |
| Significant decline in financial status | | | | |
| Significant improvement financial status | | | | |
| Spouse or partner went to work | | | | |
| Spouse or partner laid off from work | | | | |
| You took on a second job | | | | |
| You gave up a second job | | | | |
| Moved | | | | |
| Significant legal problems for you or your family unrelated to work (serious crime, such as rape or aggravated assault, committed against you or someone in your immediate family) | | | | |
| Other significant negative event (for example, house fire; placement of parent in nursing home; relative or adult child coming to live in your home or going to live somewhere else) | | | | |
| Other significant positive event (for example, placement of parent in nursing home; relative or adult child coming to live in your home or going to live somewhere else) | | | | |

SECTION D HOW YOU DEAL WITH STRESS

18. There are many different ways we respond to stress in our lives. They include engaging in individual activities and seeking out assistance from others. Please indicate in the following charts how often you engaged in any of these activities because of stress in the last three months.

| | Never | 1-2 times | A few times a month | 1 week or more |
|---|-------|-----------|---------------------|----------------|
| Used stress management or relaxation techniques (for example, meditation) | | | | |
| Worked overtime or more overtime than before | | | | |
| Relaxed by yourself (for example, listened to music; read magazines, books, newspapers; surfed the Internet) | | | | |
| Engaged in a hobby | | | | |
| Engaged in recreational activities (for example, outdoor sports, reading, going to the movies or concerts, bowling) | | | | |
| Practiced nutritious eating habits | | | | |
| Engaged in regular exercise | | | | |
| Increased your use of alcohol | | | | |
| Socialized outside the police world | | | | |
| Took prescription medication for stress (tranquilizer, sleeping pill) | | | | |
| Other activities (please specify): _____ | | | | |

| | Never | 1-2 times | A few times a month | 1 week or more |
|--|-------|-----------|---------------------|----------------|
| Talked to other police officers | | | | |
| Talked to my spouse or partner | | | | |
| Visited a physician | | | | |
| Talked to other family members or friends | | | | |
| Talked to a member of the clergy | | | | |
| Visited a counselor | | | | |
| Visited the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) | | | | |
| Participated in the department stress program: | | | | |
| Wellness program | | | | |
| Counseling referral | | | | |
| In-service training or education | | | | |
| Critical incident debriefing | | | | |
| Talked with peer supporter | | | | |
| Reached out to someone else (please specify): _____ | | | | |

| |
|------------------------------|
| SECTION E COMMENTS |
|------------------------------|

Please use the space below for any comments or clarifications that you wish to add.

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS SURVEY!