Trauma-Informed Policing: Addressing the Prevalence of Trauma in Law Enforcement Encounters

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Presenters

Sgt. Chris J Scallon, MSPsy., CCISM
CSIM/Peer Support Unit Director, CIT Coordinator, Vicarious Trauma Fellow
Norfolk Police Department & Northeastern University/IACP

Talia Peckerman, LMHC, LCAT
Policy Analyst
Council of States Governments (CSG) Justice Center
The expectation that we can be immersed in suffering and loss daily and not be touched by it is as unrealistic as expecting to be able to walk through water without getting wet.

-Rachel Naomi Remen, Kitchen Table Wisdom, 1996
I AM THE ORIGINAL DOG WISPERER!!!

He touches me when we’re alone!!!!!!
Overview

Trauma Informed Approaches

Vicarious Trauma & Primary Trauma

Self-Care

Law Enforcement Encounters
Trauma-Informed Care

Trauma-informed care shifts the focus from:

What is WRONG with you?

to

What HAPPENED to you?

Learn more at chcs.org/traumainformed
A program, organization, or system that is trauma-informed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The 4 R’s</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<td>Realizes</td>
<td>• Realizes the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recognizes</td>
<td>• Recognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff, and others involved with the system;</td>
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<td>Responds</td>
<td>• Responds by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices; and</td>
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<td>Resists</td>
<td>• Seeks to actively resist re-traumatization.</td>
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A framework for law enforcement which considers the:

- Prevalence of trauma,
- Acknowledges related symptoms, and
- Employs response tactics accordingly.
Benefits of Trauma-Informed Policing

To make you a better law enforcement officer:

A greater knowledge of sustained trauma and its effects can...

1. Facilitate criminal investigation and improve policing skills.
2. Reduce recurrence of criminal behavior, including retaliations.
3. Leverage additional community resources.
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What is Trauma?

Trauma is a reaction to persistent environmental contexts and incidents that cause ongoing stress, physical, emotional or spiritual harm.

Trauma can affect individuals as well as entire communities.
The 3 E’s of Trauma

**Event**

Events or circumstances that cause trauma

**Experience**

An individual's experience of the event determines whether it is traumatic

**Effect**

Effects of trauma include adverse physical, social, emotional or spiritual consequences
What is Vicarious Trauma?
The GOOD, BAD, & the UGLY

Story of personal crisis

Defaulting to unhealthy coping mechanisms

How can we expect to address others, when we cannot even identify our own crisis’???
Background...Baggage
Recognizing the signs...

Pre-Incident

“Incident(s)”
aka: Trauma Exposure

Immediate-Post

Acute vs. Cumulative
Vs.
Co-Occurring

Post
What can happen when organizations don’t address Vicarious Trauma?

Research suggests…
Lost Productivity
Decreased morale, cohesion, communication, collaboration and quality of services

Poor Organizational Health
Erosion of concentration, focus, decision making, motivation and performance

Staff Turnover
Time, resources needed to hire train drains remaining staff
INTRODUCING THE VICARIOUS TRAUMA TOOLKIT (VTT)
New Tools Created

- **Vicarious Trauma Organizational Readiness Guide (VT-ORG)** - available for four disciplines
- **Talking Points:**
  - Using the VTT
  - How our agency is addressing VT
- **PowerPoint trainings** (one for each discipline)
- **Guidelines**
- **Family Support**
- **Human Resources**
- **Employee and Volunteer Assistance Programs**
- **Making the Business Case**
- **Peer Support**
- **Supervision**
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SELF CARE

“Knowing is half the battle!”

-G.I. JOE

“Recognition is the other half”

-CJ
“Down these mean streets a man must go, a man who is not himself mean, who is neither tarnished nor afraid…He is the hero; he is everything…”

-Raymond Chandler

I would ask, who here has not become tarnished nor afraid?
Sometimes we need a little wake up call

We often help others with minimal emphasis on how the interaction, or repeated, interaction effects us and our ability to help/cope

We are experts in identifying an individual in crisis, or the effects of exposure to trauma... in others

Where we fall short is in our own recognition.

Even scarier, our lack of willingness to seek help.
Trauma is an emotional and chemical injury to your brain.
"Post traumatic stress is a normal reaction to an abnormal situation"
What does this look like from the inside???

home vs. work

Cognitive Behavioral

Physical Relational

Emotional Spiritual
WARNING

There are a myriad of available resources. HOWEVER, before you recommend....VET!!!!!!

Public Safety Professionals are inherently skeptical of mental health resources...suggest the wrong one and he/she may never seek help again.
Remember…

It’s not the load that breaks us down, it’s the way we carry it…”

- Lena Horne/Lou Holtz

ASK FOR HELP!!!
Resiliency

The capacity to recover quickly from challenges.
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Law Enforcement Encounters
Canaries in a Coal Mine
People With Criminal Justice Involvement

Features
- Prevalence of trauma history
- Marginalization of people with serious mental illnesses
- Substance use

Behaviors
- Goal seeking
- Poor boundaries
- Provocative
How Can Law Enforcement Work Be Traumatizing?

Systems can also replicate the dynamics of an earlier trauma causing additional trauma.

For example: A former POW being arrested and restrained.

Even interventions which are necessary or life-saving may be experienced as traumatic.

For example: Removing children from a home.
**Grounding Techniques**

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**Plant Your Feet.**

Place both feet flat on the floor. Sit up straight, feeling the chair supporting you. Feel your feet touching the floor.

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**Breathe.**

Inhale slowly while mentally counting to 5. Then exhale completely to a count of 5. Repeat 5 times.

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**Notice.**

Notice what you see around you. Say out loud 5 things you see, 4 things you hear, 3 things you can feel and 2 things you smell.
5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Exercise
Grounding & Orienting

Person

Place

Time
It’s Not About the Nail
Training for Law Enforcement

Knowledge and Understanding and Practical Skills
• **State:** “Your safety is extremely important. Please let me know if you have any safety concerns so we can address them.”

• Consider both the *physical* and *emotional safety* of the individual.

• Consider both the *actual* and *perceived safety* of the individual.
Ventilation & Validation

3 Clinical strategies

1. Active listening – Enables the individual to feel respected and important.

2. Mirroring – Enables the individual to feel understood

3. Joining – Enables the individual to feel not alone
Tell the individual what will happen and the individual’s likely role.

This intervention addresses 2 common responses to trauma:

1. Fear
2. Loss of control
In a domestic violence situation where the victim refuses to leave the abusing spouse:

Please don’t hesitate to call us again if you need.

You need to leave this relationship.

Aren’t you concerned for your children's’ safety?

Don’t you have any respect for yourself?

Here are some resources and services available for you in the community.

I know exactly how you feel because I went through the same thing. Here’s what you should do.
Thank You

Talia Peckerman, LMHC, LCAT
Policy Analyst
tpeckerman@csg.org

Sgt. Chris J Scallon, MSPsy., CCISM
Peer Support Unit Director and CIT Coordinator
christopher.scallon@norfolk.gov
(757) 328-5672