

Promoting Wellness and Resiliency in Correctional Staff

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Presentation Team



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Polling Questions

▶ In which correctional setting do you work?

- A. Community
- B. Jails
- C. Juvenile
- D. Prisons
- E. Other

▶ In which field do you work?

- A. Administration
- B. Case Management
- C. Medical/Mental Health
- D. Operational Staff
- E. Other

Learning Objectives

- ▶ Develop an understanding of the **current research** on correctional staff wellness and resiliency.
- ▶ Learn how to apply a **holistic approach** to workplace wellness.
- ▶ Gain knowledge on **promising real-world practices** that can assist and promote both wellness and resiliency.

Dr. Hayden Smith

- ▶ Officer safety and wellbeing is area of interest and I have worked with international settings on the topic.
- ▶ Over 60 journal articles, 3 books, 20 technical reports, numerous trainings, and chairs of several dissertations on the topic (e.g., including studies of officer wellbeing, retention, burnout, resiliency, absenteeism).
- ▶ Key programs: Inmates who self-injure, PREA, character dorms, mental health dorms, training academy work, and program evaluations of a wide range of officer-based programs.

Welcome

- ▶ The all-encompassing nature of staff wellbeing and resiliency.
- ▶ Stress → Burnout/absenteeism/quitting/staffing crisis
- ▶ Complex problems require partnerships.

Current Research

- ▶ Over reliance on **measuring deficits and problems** while offering few solutions.
- ▶ Using **inappropriate methods** from other work groups (i.e., police)
- ▶ Conducted by **researchers with no experience** or expertise in criminal justice settings.
- ▶ Front-line officers are a **difficult population to study**.
- ▶ **High turnover** in CO's means that policy interventions are often short-term.

Ferdik & Smith (2017) NIJ White Paper

Summary of Dangers and Risks Confronting Correctional Officers

Work-Related Dangers	Institutional-Related Dangers	Psycho-Social Dangers	Mental Health Risks	Physical Health Risks
Gangs	Role Ambiguity/Role Conflict	Work/Family Conflict	Stress	Injuries
Contraband	Demanding Work Obligations	Media/Political Scrutiny	Burnout	Death
Mentally ill Inmates	Poor Leadership/Trust/Support			
Disruptive Inmates	No Input into Decision-Making			
Disease-Afflicted Inmates	Inadequate Resources			
Riots	Inadequate Employment Benefits			
	Extended Hours			
	Co-worker Conflict			
	Understaffing			

Wellness Poll Question

- ▶ When correctional officers are asked about stress, what do you think their most common response is?
 - A. "Those inmates are just too much"
 - B. "The administration doesn't care"
 - C. "I am worried about violence"
 - D. "I don't get paid enough"
 - E. "I don't know my role"

Wellness

The active pursuit of activities, choices and lifestyles that lead to a state of holistic health.



Resiliency

- ▶ Resiliency: “being able to continue functioning relatively normally”.
- ▶ In research I use the term “**bounce back**” because it is understandable to people.
- ▶ 1) Social support is key.
- ▶ 2) Good physical & mental health habits
- ▶ 3) Flexibility in thought: Creating new frameworks...

Changing a Framework

- ▶ How to change a framework?
- ▶ Welcome to baggage claim

- ▶ Inmates who engage in self-injurious behaviors.



Old Framework	New Framework
Inmate motivation: Manipulation, control movement, hospital tour.	Inmate motivation: Early/severe trauma, coping, mental distress.
Response: Staff stress, staff take behavior personally, punitive isolation of inmate.	Response: Empathy, staff do not take personally, staff assist in prevention & response with training.
Outcome: Class action lawsuits, increased mental illness, staff burnout/stress, etc.	Outcome: Improved outcomes for staff, inmates, and the workplace.

Holistic: The Two Pillars of a Healthy Work Life (Control & Meaning)

- ▶ Bus drivers vs. Taxi Drivers



- ▶ What opportunities are there in your current workplace to provide a **sense of control** and **meaning in the work** of officers and staff ?
- ▶ Prison Example: **Programs and Community-Based**

Best Practices

- ▶ Three criteria towards best practices
 - ▶ Innovative (as new or unique as possible)
 - ▶ Cost effective (as cheap as possible)
 - ▶ Comprehensive (as holistic as possible)
- ▶ Hypothetical: Correctional Officer on 12-hour night shift.

Karin Ho

- ▶ Over 25 years experience working in corrections in both Ohio and South Carolina
- ▶ Provides technical support and guidance to correctional agencies across the nation
- ▶ Victim Advocate for over 35 years
- ▶ Privileged to be trusted by countless crime victims, correctional employees and others to provide support to them following some of the most traumatic experiences in their lives
- ▶ Having experienced traumatic events personally, recognize the importance of peers helping peers in the aftermath of these situations

Impact of Working in Corrections

Corrections has been described as a “toxic” environment, that often changes people who work in it.

Being able to effectively manage stress and bounce back from critical events is what can make all the difference for correctional professionals



- Used to being in control
- Always "FINE"
- Judge other who react to traumatic events
- Being emotional seen as weak
- Find it hard to ask for help
- Stuff feelings & reactions



What we Know About Correctional Employees

Changing Times

- ▶ Thankfully, many agencies are starting to **recognize the toll** corrections can take on staff.
- ▶ Understanding that **critical events** can and DO **impact employees**, it important.
- ▶ Every state reports **challenges in recruiting & hiring** correctional employees, so it is critical to take care of those who do **join our profession**, so they make it a long career, rather than leaving!

Holistic - Systemic Approach

INDIVIDUAL PEER SUPPORT

Recognize that each employee's needs are different. Do your best to meet them where they are.

GROUP DEBRIEFING/DEFUSING

Peer Team adds layer of support into existing EAP and other support within agency or family structure

PCIS EVENTS (Post Critical Incident Seminar)

Address ongoing trauma-related issues through PCIS

ONGOING TRAINING FOR EMPLOYEES

Implement agency-wide, mandatory training for entire workforce addressing culture of correctional environment to strengthen resiliency

Post Critical Incident Seminar

- 3-Day Seminar
- For Employees (and their Spouse/Partner) Experiencing Ongoing Issues Related to a Traumatic Event(s)
- Combination of:
 - Presentations/Information
 - Peer Team Support
 - Small Break-Out Group Discussions
 - Opportunity to Talk with Mental Health Professional
 - Possibly Experience EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing)
 - Medical Massage Therapy
 - Mindfulness Exercises (meditation, breathing exercises, etc...)
 - Research

Be creative to **implement strategies** that effectively **break barriers and connect with staff** in the way that they need!



Trauma Dog

Recognize that not everyone likes dogs. Some may have allergies and/or be afraid of dogs. Respect everyone's feelings and train dog to wait for command to approach people.

Make sure trauma dog is **specifically trained** to work with trauma and in **highly emotional situations**.

- Can have a **calming effect** in stressful environment
- Can utilize **pressure-points** to reduce blood pressure and heart rate
- Can utilize "leaning" and "weight" to provide **feeling of being "grounded"** for someone experiencing a panic attack or Post Traumatic Stress triggering event
- And...



And...
They're CUTE and
can just be petted!

Contact Us!

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Thank you!

*Thank you for your participation today!
Please visit the National Institute of
Correction's website for more information
about additional trainings and webinars.*

www.nicic.gov

Questions?

Please submit your questions in the WebEx chat

Wellness Poll Results

- ▶ When correctional officers are asked about stress, what do you think their most common response is?
 - A. "Those inmates are just too much" 15
 - B. "The administration doesn't care" 518
 - C. "I am worried about violence" 23
 - D. "I don't get paid enough" 130
 - E. "I don't know my role" 25